

Notes of Meetings with Developers

present NP Panel:- Ian Hill (SC), Gill Bindoff (NPCoG), Jeremy Bell (SC), Norman Perry (NPCoG), Tony Powell (NPCoG)
Rachel Gill (NP Admin)

Note taking: Tom Bindoff & Terry Jackson

Sound recording: Peter Richardson

25th May 2016 - Neil Boddington – Wat 38

Following an introduction where it was explained the objective of the meeting was to update developers/agents on the progress of the NP and to give them an opportunity to demonstrate how 'their' site/sites can meet the aims and objectives of the NP and it was made clear that the meetings are not part of the site selection process'. What Watlington Wants and What Watlington doesn't Want were listed, explaining that we are attempting to discover the 'tipping point' of what level of development would be acceptable and what would not be acceptable to local residents there was some discussion about the 'wants' and 'don't wants' of Watlington. Neil asked would you not also risk losing the character of Watlington if you fill in all the gaps with development.

Tony Powell then went through the 3 stages involved in listing site preferences:

- 1. Listing all possible sites starting with those suggested by SODC Listing*
- 2. Arriving at Potential Criteria, against which to objectively evaluate sites.*
- 3. Arriving at which sites are available, which are not available and which are unknown or not currently available but could be in future.*

The site selection criteria are modelled on those used by SODC and have regard to the outcomes of Consultation 2 and work by the NP Forum.

Neil was asked if he had any questions, he did not.

Neil was representing two sites potentially, we asked if the Post Office site was still viable. Neil's response was that although it may become available as it is part owned by the PO and Rodney Rockall and given the situation it is a viable site but he was here to talk only about Watcombe Manor Site Wat 38.

Watcombe Manor industrial site section of the Planning application has been discharged as it involved relocation of businesses occupying the other half of the site. The remaining area includes 3 social units. Because of Government changes in law on social housing provision

the second planning application was withdrawn. Discussions under way as to whether this site will be coming up for planning again or not.

Gill Bindoff expressed that there will be a need for accommodation for the aged and thought perhaps this would be a good site for this because of its proximity to the town centre.

Neil said that when planning was discussed a pedestrian walk way to Brook Street was resisted meaning the only pedestrian route would be around the site on Ingham Road to Brook Street.

Gill B reaffirmed that this would be a good site for another 'Orchard Walk' type development.

Neil confirmed that we can probably expect a further planning application on the site although he is not currently involved with it – He is talking with Savills and if it comes back to him he would probably remove the 3 social homes and replace them with 2 small homes.

When asked if there were any other sites that he was aware of, he said the site to the right of the Care Home as you enter was on the cards whilst he was on the former NP Core Committee. Gill said that they are not coming forward with that but say they would favour staff housing. She enquired who he was speaking to as perhaps we are in contact with the wrong person, Tom Holden of the Trustees although it seems that Sanctuary Care have the final decision.

Neil said it could become a 'Shelter Hub'. The other site to consider would be that adjacent to the Showmen.

Tony Powell asked where Neil considered the customers for his new housing would come from.

Neil responded that Watlington is a popular place to live. People who already live here do not wish to leave but many have to extend their homes because there is such a price premium and he considers there to be a shortfall of affordable 4 and 5 bedroom homes. He also stressed that the town has a disproportionate number of 2 bed homes.

Tony conceded that in his discussion with Dorian of Griffiths & partners Watlington has a premium over other local places like Chinnor meaning the bulk of housing is sold to people coming from London.

Neil reiterated that there are few affordable 4 bed houses being built.

Gill Bindoff asked about Watcombe Manor as a brownfield site for starter homes. Neil said it would not qualify. Neil was asked if there would be access to Wat 2 which adjoins.

Neil responded that this was never mooted. He suggested that SODC were concerned about potential development going too deep into countryside to which Jeremy Bell said but everything's changed. Neil retorted 'Has it changed in reality?' There's a difference between allocating existing sites planning applications in open countryside and self contained conversion sites.

Neil said the barns at Watcombe Manor are “Heritage assets”, Local Interest buildings which is like non-listed listed buildings.

Tony Powell asked Neil about his timescales and Neil responded that there could be another planning application in a matter of days but probably 6-12 months in reality.