

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Forum

Environmental Sustainability Group

Notes of the meeting held on 13th January 2016

Present: Robert Barber, Pepita Bianchi, Gill Bindoff (Facilitator), Mike Chadwick, Fiona Danks, Peter Danks, Terry Jackson, Helen Marshall, Iain Naismith, Annette Venters, Jeanette Wooster

Apologies: Paul Sayers, Nick Thomas

Jeanette was welcomed to the meeting.

There was an initial session looking at the range of maps currently available to the NP. The aim of the meeting was to move forward on the formulation of criteria which would contribute primarily to the SA Scoping Report but also to the site selection process and NP planning policies. Further progress would be made towards the development of a sound evidence base.

Notes of the meeting on 02.12.15.

These were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising were discussed and further information recorded about sources of additional data:

1. Landscape and built environment:

(i). Nick Thomas had provided links to SODC landscape character assessments. The NP area covers three types: Chilterns Escarpment, Chilterns Ridges and Valleys and Eastern Vale Fringes.

(ii). There are also two sections of National Planning Practice Guidance which are relevant at : planningguidance.communities.gov.uk which cover Natural Environment and Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal.

(iii) Annette Venters will research the Chilterns AONB Management Plan to identify policies which apply to the NP area and adjacent areas which could be affected by the Watlington NP.

(iv). Peter Danks will obtain a land classification map. These were prepared some years ago and are unlikely to be accurate. The actual quality of agricultural land in the NP area is most likely to be 3b (not classified as Best and Most Versatile). After meeting note: the map shows that land around Watlington is classified as Grade 2 which is Best and Most Versatile. However, recent samples of soil analysed at Lewknor and Aston Rowant show it to be 3b. This indicates the likely value of the agricultural land around Watlington.

2. Biodiversity: identification of available data

(i). It was agreed to contact the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre to see what data is available for the Watlington area. Information about protected species, if any, is needed. Terry Jackson will make an initial enquiry.

(ii). Data is available from the local water courses project organised by the Watlington Environment Group. - this includes data on invertebrates and on trout.

(iii). There is also some data collected by Watlington in Bloom

- (iv). Watlington PC may have a copy of a bat survey done in relation to a planning application at Watcombe Manor
- (v). A key feature of environmental sustainability is the protection of habitats - for example the need for connectivity to avoid species becoming isolated.

3. Water and water courses:

- (i). The website. 'what's in my backyard?' is a very useful source of information
- (ii). Maps showing the Source Protection Zone (SPZ) and Water Safeguard Zones are available and need to be added to the NP database. Some potential development sites around Watlington are within these zones. Plans for development of these sites will need to take the implications of the zones into account.
- (iii). It was noted that the classification of the whole water body at Watlington is 'Poor' but the implications of this rating are not clear.
- (iv). Thames Water had prepared a presentation for a visit by WEG members to the Watlington borehole. This will be circulated to members of the group.
- (v). The Thames Water response to the NP Consultation 2 will also be circulated

4. Local green spaces:

- (i). Small areas of woodland within the town were identified. These include a small wood between The Meadows and St Leonard's Church and a small area adjacent to the boundary of Watlington a Primary School.
- (ii). Robert Barber will research information on trees covered by preservation orders. Preservation orders can also be placed on areas of woodland. - this possibility will be included in the research.

Draft environmental criteria for inclusion in the SA Scoping Report:

- (i). Mike Chadwick had circulated extracts from the existing draft SA Scoping Report together with extracts from Wycombe District Council's criteria relating to development in Princes Risborough and from site selection criteria used in the development of the Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan. This provided contrasting approaches to the use of criteria in a sustainability appraisal and in the selection of development sites.
- (ii). There was a discussion about the relative merits of the different approaches and about the way criteria could be 'weighted'. It was noted that the SODC advice is not to weight criteria because it adds another layer of subjective judgements to the selection process.
- (iii). In order to assist the discussion, MC offered to draft a set of environmental sustainability criteria for the group for consideration at the next meeting. It was agreed that members of the group will feed in their suggestions over the coming weekend so that there is time to prepare the draft for circulation. MC was thanked warmly for his offer.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 2nd February at 7.30p.m. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find a date when all members of the group would be available.

