

SAFFRON WALDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TEAM MEETING

18TH JULY 2017

Cllr Mike Hibbs (Chair)*	Cllr Keith Eden
Sue Flynn	Cllr Paul Gadd
Cllr Sam Goddard	Mark Hayes*
Douglas Kent	Cllr Sharon Morris**
Stephen Rapkin	Coby Richardson**
Dan Starr*	Isabella Warren*
Tom White	

*Present

** Present part-time

In attendance:

Sue Belo, SWTC Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator (taking notes)
Vic Ranger, Uttlesford Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Sarah Nicholas, Uttlesford District Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Keith Eden, Paul Gadd, Sam Goddard, Douglas Kent, Tom White, from Sharon Morris for early departure and Coby Richardson for late arrival,.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

H&CA: The meeting with Bruce Tice did not go ahead as planned but Mike Hibbs has received information from Bruce on areas still to be covered.

Action: Mike Hibbs to send to Sue Belo

East of Lime Avenue: UDC ignored the comments of SWTC and approved the application. An application has been made for Community Centre but has not yet been validated as a full ecology report is needed which has been undertaken but not yet submitted to UDC. In the meantime, the situation has gone quiet following the passing of Lord Braybrooke.

Green Infrastructure: Sue Belo has raised the issue of TPOs with Nigel Brown who remembers it being an issue. He will research the matter and send us any information he has.

Action: Sue to follow up and Isabella Warren will contact Mary Flint to ask her to help establish the missing TPOs.

4. Planning Matters

Regulation 18 Local Plan

Mike Hibbs welcomed Sarah Nicholas and Vic Ranger to the meeting. He said that in his position of Chairman of the NP Team that we are not in a position to challenge the Local Plan and can take a separate view from the Town Council. There has been some confusion over versions of the Local Plan but the definitive document is the one on the UDC website and in the email link. Sarah Nicholas said that the document is now out for consultation.

There was a discussion on some of the key areas. Densities is a key issue as such a rigid policy may prevent Neighbourhood Plans from having any say in the type of housing which

needs to be appropriate to the character of the area. It was felt that there should be reference to appropriate neighbourhood plans with a generic average density should no other guidelines be in force. There is also the issue that UDC appears make its calculations of housing on the basis of gross area rather than net area which then means that there is not room for integrated green and amenity space on new developments as the densities are so high. The team agreed that density should be appropriate to the area as although high densities would be acceptable in town centres, they were not appropriate as a soft edge to villages and historic market towns.

On the allocations for Saffron Walden, Dan Starr said that R4U had raised the issue of the care facility and retirement village. 42 residential units are to be built there but have not been counted in the allocation for Saffron Walden. Sarah Nicholas said that it should have been included in the allocation as an existing commitment. The figure should have been included in the 548 approved by 2016 and shown in the five-year trajectory. Outline permission for the care home has now expired so this will need review.

Dan Starr said that the smaller sites were all in sustainable locations because they were not on the east side of the town. It could therefore be argued that the Keir site should be for 108 homes and not 150 because the 42 are also on the east side of the town.

Sarah Nicholas said that to reduce the site more than 150 (300 and 150 were tested as part of the traffic study) would mean that you would not get the mitigations required from Keir to make the site viable. She said that the Transport Study demonstrated that a site of 150 homes was acceptable, but 300 homes were unacceptable due to traffic and air quality implications.

Mike Hibbs said that there was also the requirement for a two FE primary school but that the Keir site could not provide that as the land was needed on Shire Hill. He also said that the team was positive towards policies on protecting views because Saffron Walden is in a bowl but has some stunning views. For that reason, he was not sure that Keir site was the best location for housing because of the impact on views.

Dan Starr said that Engelman site would have allowed a 2 FE primary school. Sarah said that if they had developed just the Engelman land then all traffic would have fed to the one junction on Radwinter Road. The other site gave more options on where to travel but Dan Starr said that the Keir study didn't really make sense. He added that it would be useful to understand why the Engelman land has been rejected from the allocation.

Sarah said that her knowledge was limited but Highways had reservations about the link road through the Manor Oaks estate. If the egress were via the Radwinter Road, then most traffic would feed into Shire Hill.

Mark Hayes said that there is a concern for the primary school because it is a one-form entry site. There are ways it could be expanded e.g. Engelman land. Schools are under a lot of pressure to expand and although it would be possible to go ahead with a one-FE school, there was a risk of the single FE site becoming overdeveloped.

Mark Hayes said that there was an issue with the dead-end road at the school if the link road was not to be constructed.

It was agreed that the NP team could consider alternative sites as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Sarah Nicholas said that Regulation 19 Consultation will be at the end of the year with a view to submitting the Local Plan to the inspector by beginning of 2018. If the team wanted to submit sites then a lot of work will be needed and quickly.

John Lodge said that it would be sensible for the NP team to work closely with UDC over the coming months and Vic Ranger said that would happen.

There were discussions about some of the development management policies. Mike Hibbs said that Paul Gadd's main concern was due to the lack of sports provision, cycle improvements, and green infrastructure.

There was also a discussion about mapping as the current map does not show all green space. It was agreed that it would be useful to have a map that differentiated between protected green space and public open space. This would enable the NP team to identify those green spaces that could possibly be included as Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan and protect them from future development.

There was concern over green space allocation as Uttlesford do not prioritise this enough – it currently allocates an amount per head of only one-sixth or one-seventh of the green space allocated by South Cambs. Dan Starr asked on behalf of Paul Gadd about sports pitches as more are needed than identified in the Local Plan.

It was agreed that the team would collate their comments and questions and arrange a meeting with officers as appropriate during the day.

Urgent Action: All to review Local Plan and come up with list of their areas of concern.

5. Education

An email had been received from Douglas Kent saying that the Walden School has gone into liquidation.

Mark Hayes said that background was that the Saffron Academy Trust (SAT) had been approached by the trustees and governors of Walden School saying that they were not in a position to continue and thought that the DfE might like to buy the site. The new primary school was part of the Free School programme.

Katherine Semar is already part of the SAT and now RA Butler will also be part of the Trust. The DfE surveyed Walden site thoroughly and had been planning to secure the site for education. Would have like to see the primary school opening there and an annex for the SWCHS. Would have allowed the SWCHS to have expanded sixth form on their current site. Caroline Derbyshire received an email from Lord Nash this week saying that the DfE had decided not to go with the Walden school site and that the Manor Oaks site represented better value for money. Had also looked at the statistics provided by Essex saying that school was not needed until 2020. If there had not been a General Election then it would have gone ahead. There may be an opportunity of a Shire Hill building that could be incorporated into the site which may allow expansion of the school.

It is now important that the building is listed as the DfE said that it would cost millions to bring the building up to state school standards. It is a four-storey building – the ground and first floors are in good condition but dormitories and higher floors need a lot of work.

Mike Hibbs said that he knows that Barclays are already talking to developers.

Mark Hayes said that it was likely that there will be two new secondary schools in Uttlesford, one in the north and one in the south of the district.

It was noted that there is a need for more adult education in the town and that there was the possibility of using Walden School for this purpose.

One of the main issues was the swimming pool at the school which has been used by the Saffron Seals swimming club and members of the community. SWCHS has an outdoor pool but this was closed some years ago due to its limited period of use. Derek Jones presented plans for an indoor pool but no funding plans. Crowd funding/parental funding could be a consideration. It was agreed that the priority should be to protect the sports facilities for Walden School.

John Lodge said that it is likely that receivers will want to deal with the site as quickly as possible.

Urgent Action: Mike Hibbs to pursue with SWTC listed building status for the site.

6. Plan Development/Planning Policy Workshop

Mike Hibbs asked Sue Belo to contact Rachel on behalf of the team and thank her for an excellent workshop.

Action: Sue

Rachel had recommended the East Leake Neighbourhood Plan (good on improving connectivity) and Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan (good on heritage) as examples of plans worth studying. Coby Richardson said that she thought that East Leake was useful and well written although she did not find the second plan as useful.

7. Consultation and Engagement

The Family Day was very successful but it took nearly an hour and a half to put up but was very impressive. Lisa Courtney said that no more than 10% made the mistake of thinking it was the Local Plan and that it was very busy with several families engaging. The tent was in an excellent location too. It was agreed that such events are worthwhile for future consultation and engagement.

8. Next Meeting – Tuesday 8th August

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 8th August when the Local Plan will be discussed.