

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel held on Wednesday, 10th January, 2018 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor P Gidney (Chairman), Mrs J Collingham, C J Crofts, M Chenery of Horsbrugh, M Howland, P Kunes, C Manning, G Middleton, T Parish, D Pope (substitute for Mrs E Watson), A Tyler and Mrs A Wright.

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor R Blunt – Portfolio Holder for Development
Councillor Mrs E Nockolds – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health

Officers:

Stuart Ashworth – Planning Control Manager
Chris Bamfield – Executive Director
Mark Fuller – Principal Project Surveyor
Ray Harding – Chief Executive
Matthew Henry – Property Services Manager
Nikki Patton – Housing Strategy Officer
Hannah Wood-Handy – Principal Planner

RD69: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Beales and Mrs Watson.

RD70: **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RD71: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was none.

RD72: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

RD73: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

There was none.

RD74: CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairman informed the Panel that he had received correspondence from an individual regarding agenda item RD78: St George's Guildhall Update stating that they were disappointed that the item was being discussed in closed session and that they wouldn't be able to attend to hear the update. The Chairman explained that a media release would be prepared and circulated to update the public, which would be available to the individual who had sent in the correspondence.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health informed the Panel that she had also spoken to the individual on the matter and explained that she had provided an update in November 2017. She was also in regular communication with the main users of the Arts Centre to keep them updated on progress.

The Panel was informed that volunteers did still open up the Arts Centre so that visitors could view the Centre. Councillor Mrs Nockolds stated that she felt that most of the users and interested parties understood and acknowledged the processes that had to be gone through and all supported the Council in making it a success for the future.

The Chairman explained that he would acknowledge the correspondence and a press release would be available in due course.

RD75: NEW HOMES BONUS

The Assistant Director provided the Panel with a presentation on changes to the New Homes Bonus and the financial impact that it could have to the Council when Planning Decisions were overturned at Appeal stage. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for his presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question, it was clarified that at the moment the reduction to the new homes bonus was applicable to the number of decisions overturned on appeal. It did not currently consider the amount of units within the decision, however this could change in the future.

It was confirmed that the revised arrangements were scheduled to come into force in 2018/2019 but a specific date had not yet been set.

In response to a question from Councillor Manning, it was explained that the New Homes Bonus was applicable to built units, which were matched to Council Tax records.

The Panel discussed the appeal process, the outcome of recent appeals and the pressure that would be put on Planning Committee Members to ensure that they considered applications carefully during the determination process.

The Chief Executive explained that Government had introduced the New Homes Bonus to offset some of the reduction in Revenue Support Grant and the aim of the New Homes Bonus was to incentivise house building. He referred to the presentation which showed a future reduction in what the Council could earn back by building houses. He explained that the Local Government Association and District Council Network were lobbying Government that there should not be a baseline and the amount and number of years should not be reduced. He explained that when determining applications, careful consideration needed to be given as to if there were defensible grounds for refusing applications if they were to go to appeal, if the application was within an allocated site and if the application conformed to the Councils policies.

In response to a question from Councillor Pope it was explained that a portion of the New Homes Bonus would be allocated to Adult Social Care and therefore go to Norfolk County Council. It was unconfirmed at this time if the portion of funds for Adult Social Care would be affected by any reduction from overturned appeals. The Assistant Director also explained that house build rates were slower than planning application approval rates and sometimes approved applications did not go ahead. There were conditions attached to planning approvals on completion and development timescales before an approval would lapse.

Councillor Mrs Collingham stated that she failed to understand how the building of second homes would fulfil the Government's incentive to accelerate the amount of housing available.

The Panel discussed the planning process and the role of the Planning Committee and Planning Officers. The Chief Executive commented that often Planning Officers did give pre-application advice to developers, but it was ultimately up to developers on what they submitted. He felt that most developers would be aware of the Local Plan, allocated sites and allocation numbers, and would have a good knowledge of what was likely to get approved.

In response to a comment from Councillor Crofts, the Portfolio Holder for Development, Councillor Blunt explained that work was ongoing to revise the Local Plan and work would be carried out to ensure correct site size and match them to the correct density of housing during the allocation process.

The Chief Executive reiterated that Government was being lobbied, but the Prime Minister had made it a Government priority to increase housing and therefore he felt that it would be pushed hard. He

explained that the Government had introduced incentives to accelerate housing growth such as Housing Infrastructure Funds and direct support to small developers.

RESOLVED: The update was noted.

RD76: **INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN AND WEST WINCH DEVELOPMENT**

The Housing Strategy Officer provided the Panel with an update on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) for the key strategic site at West Winch. She explained that the purpose of the IDP was to identify the key strategic infrastructure to develop the entire growth area. It would include information on the infrastructure required, costs, delivery and timing. As part of the IDP, the biggest piece of infrastructure required would be the West Winch Relief Road.

The Panel was informed that consultants had been appointed to create the IDP and a first draft document had now been prepared. Key stakeholders had been consulted on the IDP and it was noted that the key stakeholders were mainly developers and land owners. It was also confirmed that the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Group had been kept up to date with the process.

It was explained that once adopted, the IDP would become a material planning consideration when determining applications in the area.

The Housing Strategy Officer explained that all key stakeholders had been invited to attend a presentation on the IDP and provided with the opportunity to meet with officers on a one to one basis. They had also been given the opportunity to submit written comments on the IDP. The Consultants would now review all feedback and comments received and would prepare the final draft of the IDP which was expected towards the end of January 2018. Following receipt of the final draft, a further round of consultation would take place.

Once the IDP had been agreed and finalised it would be used for developer agreements which would be a legal document outlining land uses and development plan zones.

The Panel was informed that a bid had been submitted for Government Grant for the Relief Road and it was anticipated that the outcome of the bid would be known in mid-February 2018. If successful the bid would be used to accelerate the development of the road by the way of loans to developers.

The Principal Planner explained that a feasibility study was being undertaken for the relief road and the Panel was provided with a map of the area and the position of the road, as attached to the minutes. She explained that a successful bid to the Norfolk Business Rates Pool

had provided match funding to carry out the feasibility study. Information was provided on the location of the road and it was explained that the detail would be available from the feasibility study.

The Chairman thanked officers for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from the Vice Chairman, Councillor Wright, the Housing Strategy Officer provided detail on the Government bid which had been submitted and explained that any loans would be subject to state aid rules with regards to interest. She explained that contracts and loan agreements would be required and the Council would specify the works required. The repaid loans could then be used to reinvest in other infrastructure works to assist with accelerating development. It was explained that if the bid was unsuccessful the Council would have to look at alternative funding arrangements, or wait for the development to come forward as developers could deliver.

It was confirmed that the maximum bid which could be submitted was £10 million and the Council had submitted a bid for £9.6 million using the Government formula. Councillor Middleton commented that if the bid was unsuccessful could developers look to borrow elsewhere or use their own funds to accelerate the development of the road. The Housing Strategy Officer explained that the developer economy in West Norfolk was not high value and there needed to be a balance between planning policies and developer economics. She explained that West Norfolk competed with high value development areas such as Norwich and Cambridge where there was more significant value. She explained that the purpose of the bid for grant funding was to act as an enabling fund to allow units to be developed quicker and assist with developer cash flow in the early stages of the development.

In response to a question from Councillor Manning, it was explained that work on the road would be required to commence by 2021 in line with Government funding arrangements.

Councillor Crofts asked about the school and education provision and if the Government bid for grant funding was successful, could some of the funds be used for this. It was clarified that the funds could only be used to accelerate development in the area and schools and education requirements would come into consideration later in the process.

In response to a question from Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh, it was explained that the NHS and Primary Care Trust had been consulted on the local Plan and had been provided with information on the IDP.

RESOLVED: The update was noted.

RD77: **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

RD78: **EXEMPT - ST GEORGE'S GUILDHALL UPDATE**

The Executive Director presented the report which updated the Panel on options for the St Georges Guildhall complex and the implications for Capital Funding. Information was also provided on the work which was taking place which would help to strengthen any future grant applications. The Executive Director explained that the Panel were asked to consider the options for the complex and provide a steer for Cabinet on the preferred way forward.

The Panel were provided with information on the following:

- Previous work which had been carried out.
- How the Guildhall Complex had been run in the past.
- The reasons why the previous bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund had been unsuccessful.
- Work which had been carried out with other organisations.
- Future funding opportunities.

The Principal Project Surveyor presented the Panel with information on the current issues with the site and potential ideas for the future.

The Chairman thanked officers for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Tyler commented that the facility was a good venue for small organisations to hire and it should be retained. However consideration needed to be given to the state of the facilities and ways to encourage other organisations to make use of the facilities. Councillor Manning agreed that it was a useful facility for smaller organisations but the spaces available needed to be more flexible and he supported removable seating in the Guildhall to make it a more usable space.

Councillor Kunes commented that he did not feel that many people had visited the Guildhall Complex, or only had occasion to use it very rarely. He queried if there was a need for the facility given that there were other facilities in the area which could be utilised.

Councillor Middleton referred to the Arts offer in King's Lynn and he felt that there were a lot of creative people in the area, but there needed to be a way to draw them into the Guildhall Complex. He felt that the Council needed to do something completely different as previous

arrangements had not worked. He felt that significant investment would be required to draw people in from the wider area.

Councillor Mrs Collingham suggested that an Informal Working Group be established to look at the issue in more detail. She felt that information such as price hire comparisons and market surveys were required before the Panel could provide a steer on the way forward. She also commented that local village halls were offering some of the events that had previously been offered by the Guildhall Complex.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Wright commented that the Council had worked hard on its Heritage offer and should continue to do so with regards to the Guildhall. She commented that it was one of the oldest and largest Guildhalls in the Country and was an extremely important asset to the town. She commented that there needed to be added flexibility to the use of the space and it needed to be fit for purpose. She referred to the recent designation of Heritage Action Zone which was all about selling King's Lynn on its Heritage offer. She commented that she supported the proposal for an overall site scheme.

The Panel was informed that the White Barn was the Council's Freehold property and commercial options for this area could be investigated to bring the site back into use.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health, Councillor Mrs Nockolds thanked the Panel for their contributions and the interesting debate. She explained that she was passionate about the Guildhall and explained that lots of people enjoyed attending the facility. She referred to the King's Lynn Festival which drew people in from all over the Country. She referred to the Heritage Action Zone designation and commented that it would be wrong to do nothing. She explained that she worked with external organisations and ways to improve the Arts offer in King's Lynn was being looked at.

The Chief Executive commented that there was no 'no cost' option as repair works were required and the Panel would need to weigh up whether the minimal amount of works should be carried out, or more of an investment should be put into the area. He referred to the unsuccessful Heritage Lottery Fund bid and explained that the Council needed to do something completely different to how the site had previously been run in order to attract funding opportunities. The Chief Executive commented that often the best way to preserve historical buildings was to use them.

RESOLVED: (i) The Panel favoured an overall site scheme.
(ii) An Informal Working Group be established to look at the Guildhall Complex and potential site schemes and report back to the Regeneration and Development Panel in due course.
(iii) The following Members be appointed to the Informal Working Group: Councillors Mrs Collingham, Manning, Middleton, Tyler and Mrs Wright (Chairman).

RD79: WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

The following items were suggested for inclusion in the Work Programme:

- Updates on the work of the Informal Working Group established to look at the Guildhall Complex would be added to the Panels Work Programme as appropriate.
- Results of the IDP Grant Funding application.
- Update on Townscape Heritage Initiative 2.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

RD80: DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel would be held on 20th February 2018 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm