

Wells Neighbourhood Plan Working Party

Minutes

Thursday 29th April 2021 10am Zoom meeting

Present:

Roger Arguile (RA-Chair), Cheryl Curtis (CC), John Edwards (JE), Greg Hewitt (GH), Nichola Holmes (NH), Rachel Leggett (RL), Andrea Long (AL) Peter Rainsford (PR) Ben Castell (BC – on behalf of AECOM) present from 10 to 10.25am

1. Apologies: Received from Lindsay Dew (LD) and David Fennell (DF).

Jacqui Gray (JG) and Jimmy Tottle (JT) unable to join Zoom meetings.

2. Minutes of last meeting, 30.3.21

Accepted as a true record, with agreement to standardise the group's name in these and future minutes as the Wells Neighbourhood Plan Working Party (NPWP).

Agreed, that GH will put onto the Neighbourhood Plan page of the WTC website these minutes and previous from 5.11.2020 onwards. Minutes of further meetings to be uploaded until the NP process is complete.

3. Matters arising.

Design code – AECOM

RL introduced Ben Castell, attending the meeting as a Director of AECOM to update the working party on the design code/guide work ongoing. He confirmed that AECOM will provide the technical support to produce the design code in accordance with the working party's ongoing stakeholder consultation and area character appraisal so that the code can be appended to the finalised NP and linked to its policy.

Following general discussion on concepts to be included, RA and PR arranged a virtual tour of Wells town with BC on Thursday 13th May at 2pm which can be recorded on Teams for future reference. This allows time for other members of the working party to make comments and suggestions before the next NPWP meeting on May 20th. BC can then supplement his knowledge with further solo visit(s) to the area as necessary.

RL will send BC information/notes relevant to producing the design code and continue to keep him updated as more data is collected by the working party.

RL requested the provisional design code from BC by mid-June so that it can be used in the wider public consultation planned for July and the NP could then be drafted between August and October 2021.

BC left the meeting at 10.25am.

4. Finances - GH/RL

RL confirmed that the LOCALITY grant platform is now open for 2021/22 applications; she and GH will work on this together. The application wording is very important because it has to accurately specify the NP work being done for the money granted. Turnaround on the application is currently 15 working days so the LOCALITY funding will come on stream at the end of May, all being well.

In the meantime, WTC will pay from its previously agreed allowance any necessary costs to cover the funding gap. RL will provide details to GH. Expected to be around £1000.

5. Call for sites - AL

AL has circulated to the NPWP the draft form and guidance notes to be used in the proposed Call for Sites. It is aimed at landowners and their agents, to find out what other development sites for residential or any other use may be available in the NP area. NH offered to proof read the text, then AL will forward to GH for uploading onto the WTC website. It will also be publicised in the Quay magazine and by direct contact with planning applicants to the NNDC since 2017.

Agreed, that the Call will be open from Weds 5th May to Weds 30th June 2021.

Sites submitted during the Call will be independently assessed by AECOM before the NPWP decides which to include in the draft NP, to be put forward for consultation in the community. AL stressed that this does not commit anyone to developing a site.

RA will present a proposal to WTC at their meeting on Tues 4th May to request that some part of the Council's parcel of land bounded by Two Furlong Hill and Mill Rd. could be put forward for consideration as an affordable housing development.

PR asked about including Maryland in those sites to be suggested. AL said that was possible, although cooperation from the landowners would be necessary to proceed with any development.

6. Drafting of Plan Objectives – AL

AL asked the working party if the draft NP Aims and Objectives still resonated with them, in the light of the data collection done over the last few months.

Following general discussion, the following amendments were agreed so that these objectives can be put forward to the community:

Aims

By undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, the working party aims to give a voice to local residents and businesses by enabling more local participation in decisions that affect the future of the town. The Neighbourhood Plan will identify areas where a more local, "Wells", focus can be applied to planning decisions.

Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan

1. To provide housing for local people that meets the existing and future needs of those who live and work in the town, for the elderly, and for those wishing to move to the area, to retain a balance between young and old, working and retired.
2. To encourage the creation of a range of employment opportunities in the town to maintain a strong, responsive economy consistent with the character of the town.
3. To ensure that the provision of local services (domestic, health, education, transport and leisure) meets the needs of all sections of the community and visitors.
4. To protect and enhance the character of the area as a living, working town and holiday resort, set in an area of outstanding natural beauty and wildlife sensitivity.
5. To ensure that all planning decisions address the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, and to require the use of environmentally sustainable materials.

7. Updates – RL/AL

a. Stakeholder consultation. CC reports that the stakeholder consultation process is nearing completion. JE is awaiting the final response from Wells Community Hospital. PR led the request for secondary school pupils' input. This can be invited during the wider public consultation in July.

b. Design code. This was covered during Ben Castell's conversation at the start of today's meeting. RL will continue to liaise with BC to keep the process on track.

c. Character Appraisal. RL shared her latest version of the Wells town appraisal map and the working party requested further refinements. [Now circulated as version 5.]

RL thanked CC for her hard work on the South and East areas, including the draft information notes which CC has circulated to the working party.

JE agreed to standardise the notes which are produced by others so that a consistent format will appear in the character appraisal document.

PR and RA will complete work on the Town Core area.

NH will contact LD, JG and JT to complete work on the West area.

PR stated the desirability of expressing within each area, if possible, the percentage of holiday lets and second homes, given that the town is now described in official figures as having nearly 40% non-permanent residents.

AL encouraged the NPWP to discuss at the next meeting those areas which require policy in the NP. The data being collected as described above, the Housing Needs Assessment report and the Data Profile are vital for policy development. The NPWP need to decide on the form and direction of draft policies with a view to the public consultation which will be possible in the proposed July exhibition. The policy ideas can be tested with the community there, using the draft objectives as the structure of the NP.

RA requested a statement of what constitutes a policy and RL will send examples.

RL asked the NPWP to please read other NPs before the next meeting, to include at least one where they know the local area. RL will send links.

8. Communication

As agreed above, NPWP minutes will be uploaded to the WTC NP page by GH.

The forthcoming Quay magazine will include information about the Call for Sites, Placecheck and the draft NP objectives.

9. NNTPF - MP's letter

RA has circulated the response to Duncan Baker's letter sent in March to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, regarding second home ownership and affordable housing. The response dated 13th April from Christopher Pincher, Minister for Housing, gives information on how the government is addressing these issues.

RA also circulated DB's subsequent letter to Julie Chance of the North Norfolk Town & Parish Council Forum highlighting progress on these matters and requesting further research by the NNTPF. DB is also pushing for a virtual meeting with the Minister to learn more about the government's proposed "First Homes" initiative.

The NNTPF will discuss these matters at their next meeting in early June.

10. Date of next meeting.

Thursday 20th May 2021 by Zoom.

Meeting closed at 12.07pm

NH