

NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held in Newington Pavilion on 22 November 2021

Present: Cllr Stephen Harvey (Chairman), Cllr Richard Palmer (Vice Chairman), Cllr Steve Godmon and Cllr James Morgan; and visiting member Cllr Eric Layer; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk)

Cllr Harvey welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Tony Mould; apologies accepted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present

4. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW CONSULTATION AUTUMN 2021

After discussion, the following responses were agreed:

Question 1

National Planning Policy and Guidance:

How do you think the Local Plan should be amended to address the NPPF requirement for Local Plans to set larger scale developments within a 30-year vision?

The Parish Council agrees that the Local Plan should be amended at this stage. We hope it will be adhered to strictly and we have great concerns regarding the windfall numbers.

NB we are unable to find a clear definition as to what is a larger scale development.

Question 2

Environmental Impacts:

Do you have any comments on the interim Sustainability Appraisal? Please explain the reasons for your comments. Do you think any changes to the interim Sustainability Appraisal are necessary? If so, please set out these changes and the reasons why you think they are needed.

We believe it to be sound as far as our understanding goes. We have a limited understanding of technical aspects. We are not suggesting changes at this stage.

Question 3

Key issues and challenges:

Do you agree with the key issues and challenges that we have identified? If not, what other issues do you think need to be considered further and addressed by the Local Plan Review.

In general, we agree with the key issues but would want to draw particular attention to the potential for developers to control development of land in key new locations that could work against the maximisation of land values and therefore community benefits which we believe has shaped Swale in recent years.

Question 4

The Vision for Swale:

Do you agree this is the right Vision for the borough? If not, please explain what changes you would like to see made to the Vision and why.

We believe the vision does not give suitable weight to the many villages throughout Swale.

Question 5

Objectives:

Do the draft Objectives support the Vision and set appropriate goals for the Local Plan? Please give your reasons, identifying the objectives that you support or objectives that you oppose explaining any changes you would like to see and why.

We believe the objectives do support the vision but note that they are very generic and could apply to anywhere in the UK or beyond.

Question 6

Housing requirement and supply:

Do you think that the council should attempt to justify not complying with the Government's Standard Method for calculating the borough's housing need figure (due to the constraints of the Swale, such as the natural environment, flood risk, infrastructure), which means that the council would not fully meet the housing target? Please explain why and say what you believe the "exceptional circumstances" would be for Swale not to meet the figure.

Whilst we feel that the Government set quotas are unfair in Swale, we are pessimistic concerning the chances of success in justifying not meeting the Government standard method for calculating housing need. We would wish though, to stress the limitations in Swale due to flood plains, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and areas of Air Quality Management.

Question 7

Housing requirement and supply:

Do you believe that if we do not fully meet our target, we should consider asking our neighbours to provide for our unmet development needs? If so, what reasons would the Council give, who would we ask and why would they be well placed to help? Likewise, if asked by a neighbouring council to consider meeting their unmet development needs, what should be our response and why?

We should consider asking our neighbours to provide for our unmet development needs, especially Canterbury City Council regarding the proposed development at Brenley Corner which is a transport interchange used by residents of Canterbury and Swale.

NB In 2.2.3, the list of neighbours Ashford has been excluded.

Question 8

Housing requirement and supply:

Do you agree that the allocations listed in Appendix 2 should be rolled forward into the reviewed Local Plan? If not, please explain why you think this, supporting your response with reference to any evidence.

Yes

Question 9

Housing requirement and supply - Windfalls:

Do you agree with the proposed windfall allowance rate of 250 dwellings per annum? If not, what evidence do you have to support a different windfall allowance rate.

We regret the fact that Swale is so dependent on windfall sites as this makes a mockery of local planning.

Question 9 – Evidence (none)

Question 10

Housing requirement and supply - Settlement Hierarchy:

Do you agree that the strategy for allocating future development needs in the borough should include small scale development at thriving villages? If not, please explain why you think this?

We are concerned about the Settlement Hierarchy as it stands and have previously given our reasons as to why Newington meets the requirements but not the spirit of Tier 4. Newington is assessed as Tier 4 – ‘Rural Local Service Centre’

1 Primary Health Care

- Our doctor’s surgery is open two afternoons per week and is currently not accepting new patients.
- The surgery is the former hairdresser’s salon directly facing the pedestrian crossing, meaning it is not possible for drivers to drop patients off outside the surgery.
- There is no parking provision proposed for patients or staff: The main Village car park, adjacent to the Village Hall would mean a walk that some patients would find too difficult. Station Road, Church Lane and Bull Lane are all usually full with resident and commuter parking. The landowner has verbally referred to an informal arrangement with the current staff of The Bull PH which, if space were available, would mean crossing Bull Lane and the main A2. The Bull is currently renovating its car park with ‘sleeping policemen’ planned to prevent such casual parking
- The part-time GP provision of two afternoons per week means, outside these hours and for other services, patients would have to travel to the GPs’ main surgery at The Lakeside Centre in Kemsley to which there is no direct public transport link (two buses: 326 a change and walk in Sittingbourne to the 370S, followed by a half-mile walk from Trinity Road). The alternative for those with transport or able to afford a taxi is a 5-mile, 15 minute drive.

2 Education.

The village primary school OFSTED rated ‘good’ and the on-site pre-school provision. The school is full. The S106 agreement with Persimmon homes means children now must travel 4 miles to Regis Manor School from age 4 years. We have no secondary provision. Village children must travel to Sittingbourne or Rainham from age 11 years. KCC has stated the school is not capable of being extended or increased for more numbers. This was highlighted during the 99 High Street Planning Application and the S106 agreement with Persimmons.

3 Post Office

There is a very limited post office provision within the pharmacy. For more major post office services residents must travel to Sittingbourne. The actual post office closed some 3-4 years ago.

4 Transport

The Settlement Hierarchy Study states:

Newington and Teynham have the highest level of services and facilities serving their communities as well as having train stations, but overall, public transport provision is fair or limited. They are more isolated from the strategic road network but generally closest to the main link roads in between (the A249 and the A2).

There are hourly train services to Sittingbourne and towards London. There is a limited bus service on Saturdays and no provision on Sundays. All public transport links are east-west. It is very difficult to travel south to Maidstone and to the important employment area of Kings Hill.

It should not be forgotten that Newington is an Air Quality Management Area. The Pond Farm planning inquiry and subsequent legal judgments through to the court of appeal decision demonstrate why further housebuilding should not be permitted in the village.

While a settlement hierarchy may be appropriate and helpful in plan making the Tier 4 – ‘Rural Local Service Centre’ classification for Newington misses some very important facts and one is that you can add water to an half empty bucket but once the bucket is full its full, Newington, in terms of large scale planning is full for the above reasons plus its geography. Owing to the lack of local GP services and Government/NHS England’s policy of funding for health be

centred in large health centres & an A2 that cannot be improved through Newington plus the Air Quality issues in the centre of the village, which is not decreasing. Also, either side of Newington there are two AQMAs, one in Rainham, & the other at Keycol Hill Bobbing which was declared following a review earlier this year.

We have highlighted the state of GP services and Education which should not be considered in the hierarchy approach taken by the Council as they are full and unable to be expanded. Even the train service in the rush hour is full and no extra services will be provided. The post office is nothing more than a place to weigh a parcel and have it delivered; a service provided in many small convenient stores by Hermes etc throughout the Borough.

Question 11

Option 1 Business as usual:

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

It will do nothing to enhance life for the people of Swale through the continuation of what began as piece-meal developments in previous flawed Plans based on the flawed tier structure. Newington meets the requirements but not the spirit of Tier 4, please see answer to question 10.

We do not share the optimism of the effects of the M2/ junction 5 and A249 works and the reliance upon the A2 corridor will further increase pollution throughout the Air Quality Management Areas which is an issue Swale Borough Council has ignored for too long in the face of legal judgements. We would stress the danger of the *“dilution of the separation, and identity, between Sittingbourne and the surrounding rural settlements”*.

Question 12

Option 1 Business as usual:

Do you agree with the potential advantages and disadvantages listed in the document for this development option? Can you think of any others that you would add?

The rural service centres cannot be expected to grow continually and we would point out that we suffer from the fact that the Local Plan, Policy ST 3 identified Newington as a Tier 4 Rural Local Service Centre with noted limitations to expansion, so the village was allocated a growth rate of 1.3%. Even in the 2017 edition of the Local Plan, the restrictions on growth were reiterated with the single exception of “Land North of the High Street”.

The reality is: Total already built in Newington 2014 to now is 180 properties

- a. For the target six years to date that is **297.5%**
- b. Or for the full 17 year quota that is already **105.3%**

Since the Census in 2011 (population 2551 in 1089 household spaces; data from 2021 not yet available), this village has grown by 18%.

We also note that following the SHLAA consultation process last year, the decision by the Planning Policy Committee on 29 October 2020 was to accept the officer recommendation *‘that no sites in Newington should be progressed for inclusion as allocations in the Local Plan Review’*. This was subsequently ratified by Swale Cabinet and Full Council.

Question 13

Option 2 More even distribution of the additional development requirements across the borough’s main urban centres and rural areas:

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

Whilst accepting that this option may deliver the quantity of housing required, it is not an option we favour.

Question 14

Option 2 More even distribution of the additional development requirements across the borough’s main urban centres and rural areas:

Do you agree with the potential advantages and disadvantages listed in the document for this development option? Can you think of any others that you would add?

The optimism that this option would create greater certainty over the delivery of housing is greatly outweighed by the disadvantages of the road network and the inevitable effect of pollution within the Air Quality Management Areas, especially Keycol, Newington and the nearby Rainham Air Quality Management Areas.

Question 15

Option 3 More even distribution of the final requirements across the main urban centres (when combined with allocations in the current local plan, Bearing Fruit):

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

The locations will help deliver the development but we are concerned about the credence given to 30% windfall sites which makes a nonsense of strategic planning.

Question 16 Option 3 More even distribution of the final requirements across the main urban centres (when combined with allocations in the current local plan, Bearing Fruit):

Do you agree with the potential advantages and disadvantages listed in the document for this development option? Can you think of any others that you would add?

We would agree that it addresses the imbalance of the previous 5-year plan as has been highlighted by the Planning Inspector in depth in public and we believe that a well-designed carefully controlled and phased development to the east of the Borough could genuinely enhance Faversham Town Centre.

Question 17

Option 4 More of the overall development requirements at the eastern end of the borough:

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

Yes.

Question 18

Option 4 More of the overall development requirements at the eastern end of the borough:

Do you agree with the potential advantages and disadvantages listed in the document for this development option? Can you think of any others that you would add?

We believe that this redresses the historic imbalances of the previous five-year plan repeated from earlier plans.

We believe that a well-designed carefully controlled and phased development to the east of the Borough could genuinely enhance Faversham town centre.

Question 19

Option 5 Focus our development requirements on Strategic Development Sites and/or urban extensions primarily located within existing rural areas:

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

We are very concerned by this option as the majority would be allocated to rural areas least able to cope creating second-rate isolated settlements without a full range of services rather than strategic developments around towns.

Question 20

Option 5 Focus our development requirements on Strategic Development Sites and/or urban extensions primarily located within existing rural areas:

Do you agree with the potential advantages and disadvantages listed in the document for this development option? Can you think of any others that you would add?

We believe the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages and do not believe that these will provide sustainable communities with the full range of facilities which residents need.

Question 21

Option 5 Focus our development requirements on Strategic Development Sites and/or urban extensions primarily located within existing rural areas:

Do you agree that the broad locations shown in the document will help to deliver this development option? If not, why not?

The broad locations might deliver development needs but we are concerned about piece-meal developments outside of these which do not meet the tests of sustainability.

Question 22

SHLAA and promoted sites through the Reg 19:

Do you think that we have considered all of the suitable alternative development options? If no, please explain and set out the details of an alternative option that you feel we have missed. (If you have a single site to submit please do so under the next question).

Potentially, land between Brenley Corner and the A2 which would be close to the motorway, major roads and the main line train services.

Question 23

SHLAA and promoted sites through the Reg 19:

Do you have a site that would be suitable for housing development that is not shown on the map? Please include a plan.

No suggestions.

Question 23 – Evidence (none)

Question 24

Summary of the options and key considerations:

Do you think the Preferred Development Option (option 3) for meeting our housing target is the most suitable and meets our vision, objectives and the principles of sustainable development? If not please identify how the preferred option could be changed or if you believe one of, or a mixture of the other options, are more suitable, please say why.

We believe Option 3 is potentially the best of the options although we also believe Option 4 is strong.

Question 25

Summary of the options and key considerations:

Do you think that any of the areas identified for potential development should be progressed as 'Areas of Opportunity' to enable a more comprehensive approach to master planning for their development and infrastructure needs? If not, please say why.

We believe 'Areas of Opportunity' that is carefully planned and phased to a strictly managed masterplan should be applied to developments in Option 3 and Option 4.

Question 26

Climate change - What you've told us so far:

Do you agree with the view held by the developers as shown on page 46 of the document?

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

Given the importance of Climate Change issues we do not understand why it is not a basic requirement for all new homes to have solar panels and heat pumps in addition to wiring for electric charging points.

Question 27

Climate change:

Do you think the council should accept this view or seek to be more ambitious and continue to aim to embed sustainable/active travel measures across new developments? What are the reasons for your answer?

Kent has relatively good communications East/ West but extremely limited North/ South communications, for example public transport to Maidstone requires one or more change of buses or travel to Swanley to change train line; Kings Hill, where many locals work, is even more problematic. We feel that many developer-led solutions are half-hearted, for example car sharing leaflets or provision of a low number of bicycle racks at nearby stations.

Question 28

Place shaping/design - What you've told us so far:

Do you think the policies on design (as contained in the Pre-Submission Local Plan, February 2021) should be updated to reflect the changes in the NPPF? If answered yes, what changes do you think need to be made to the policies?

Yes policies should be designed as necessary to meet the needs of the NPPF.

Question 29

Place shaping/design: What you've told us so far:

Do you think the policies on trees (as contained in the Pre-Submission Local Plan, February 2021) should be updated to reflect the changes in the NPPF? If answered yes, what changes do you think need to be made to the policies?

Yes policies on trees should be updated to reflect changes in the NPPF.

Question 30

Protecting and enhancing environment and heritage issues. What you've told us so far:

Do you agree that the council should be ambitious in its requirement for biodiversity net gain on new developments and that 20% is justified even though the emerging Environment Bill 10% is "a minimum"?

The Council should be ambitious and strict with what it requires of developers.

Question 31

New homes/housing needs: What you've told us so far:

Do you agree that the Local Plan should be clearer on how the needs of older people will be met?

Yes the Local Plan should be clearer on the needs of older people but also accepting the fact that many will be downsizing from larger homes and will be expecting high quality designed homes. We fail to understand why all homes cannot be designed to enable disabled access and regret Swale Borough Council's record in accepting a minimal proportion from developers.

Question 32

New homes/housing needs: What you've told us so far:

Do you agree with the view that new dwellings should be built to the Nationally Described Space Standards? What evidence do you have to support your answer?

We believe the Nationally Described Space Standards should be the minimum.

Question 33

New homes/housing needs. What you've told us so far:

Do you agree that the current Local Plan approach is the most appropriate or should we have a specific policy for self-build homes? If we were to have a specific policy, should we allocate sites and/or require a percentage of self-build plots for people wanting to build their own homes? If you think we should allocate sites, can you suggest any sites suitable for self-build we should consider allocating? If submitting a site, please provide a location plan and brief details about the site.

We have no strong views on a policy for self-build houses.

Question 34

New homes/housing needs. What you've told us so far:

Do you agree with the view that a lower site threshold should apply to sites within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty? What evidence do you have to support your answer?

We believe affordable housing should be based on the need and be uniform and enforced across swale.

Question 35

Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople:

Do you think that the Local Plan should continue to use a criterion-based policy only to deal with the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople? If not, do you agree with the view that the council should re-consider allocating sites to meet this need? Please say why. If you answered yes, do you think this should be done via individual site allocations, or by requiring provision to be made within larger mixed use/residential allocations?

We would wish to encourage planning for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople's needs and would find this preferable to retrospective planning applications.

Question 36

Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople:

Do you have a site that you think would be suitable for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation? If so, please state where it is (and include a site location plan if possible) and how many pitches/plots it could provide.

No.

Question 37

Economy and town centres:

Do you agree that the Local Plan should not allocate specific locations for the creative industries but instead draft the development management policies to provide flexibility to allow these businesses to set up, establish and grow?

We disagree and believe the Local Plan should allocate locations for creative industries as with comes the essential regeneration of communities.

Question 38

Economy and town centres:

Do you agree with our assessment of what we need to provide to ensure that the economy is sustained in Swale and that we can provide the right environment to attract new businesses to Swale and new employees? How else can Swale ensure that its current positive economic forecasts and ambitions come to fruition and are sustained?

We broadly agree with the assessment but would stress the importance of horticulture and agriculture making sure we retain our Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.

Question 39

Economy and town centres:

Where should we be locating the next generation of employment sites? For example, as extensions to existing sites? Close to the strategic road network? Adjacent to existing and/or new housing sites?

Employment sites should be close to main roads and also the railway network to enable community to support the Borough's plan to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Question 40

Economy and town centres:

Do you have an alternative site that hasn't been considered before that could be suitable for employment use? If so, please provide a site location plan and some key details about the site such as how much and what type of employment it could provide.

No.

Question 41

Retail and town centres:

Should there be a more flexible development management approach to building uses at ground and second floor and above in our town centres, to encourage occupation by a range of business types?

No strong view.

Question 42

Retail and town centres:

How can we adapt and improve town centre environments to make them more attractive places to dwell and spend time and to encourage greater investment and activity?

We believe the cost of parking is prohibitive and discourages the use of town centres contrasted with Hempstead Valley or Blue Water.

5. PLANNING APPLICATION

Application: 21/504836/FULL Keycol Farm, Keycol Hill, Bobbing ME9 8NA

Proposal: Change of use of land to provide two additional pitches on an existing Gypsy site. The proposed development to include two static caravans, two touring caravans, four parking spaces, associated hardstanding and infrastructure. (Works started)

Councillors considered the application. The Council continues to maintain that that it is our view that this site is unsustainable. It was noted that this is the latest in a series of planning applications and proposals for housing development. It was regretted that this again is another retrospective application at this location.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Former Working Men's Club/ Charlotte Court.

Councillors **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to continue with a formal complaint regarding this matter.

Cllr Harvey reported that he had contacted Prof Peckham regarding the developments in the village and Gladman's latest consultation. There needs to be help with the technical data. It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to budget £5,000 for expert advice.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 1 December.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Date: 30 November