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Minutes of Greenham Parish Council Planning and Highways Meeting held at 7 pm on 21st January 2021 via Zoom

Present:

Cllr Steve Jones (SJ)
Cllr Adrian Abbs (AA)
Cllr Phil Barnett (PB)
Cllr Ken Neal (KN)
Cllr Tony Vickers (TV)

In attendance:

Clerk
Chaired by Adrian Abbs
7pm Meeting started

GPC (Greenham Parish Council) Planning and Highways meeting 21st January 2021

7 Public Session

There weren't any members of the public present at the meeting

8 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Billy Drummond (BD) Attending another meeting
Cllr Martin Griffiths (MG)
Cllr Julian Swift-Hook (JSH)

9 Declarations of Interest, Statements of Position and Dispensations

To receive any Declarations of Interest and Statements of Position by Councillors.

TV - Member of West Berkshire District Council, Western Area Planning Committee

PB - Newbury Town Council, Member of West Berkshire District Council, Western Area Planning, Planning and Highways, Western Area Planning

AA - Member of West Berkshire District Council (Wash Common Ward), Shadow Executive Member for the Environment, Western Area Planning Committee (Sub), Environmental Advisory Group, Licensing Committee, Personnel Committee, Planning, Governance and Ethics Committee (Sub). Trustee for Stroke Care Newbury & West

Berkshire, Director of TEEC, The EMEA Enterprise Company and KickFire Group

KN – Vice Chair of Greenham and Crookham Common Commission and a grazier. Building Design and Environmental Consultant working on planning applications.

Discussion of GPC comments for Regulation 18 Consultation on the Emerging Draft of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037

TV – Clarified that there is a deadline of the 5th February for comments to be submitted. After the deadline changes can be made but the Parish council would be dealing with an outside organisation, not West Berkshire District Council (WBDC)

SJ – Asked about the specifics that the councillors can comment on

TV clarified Strategic policies, Site specific policies – In or near Greenham and Development control policies

Local Plan Review 2020 – 2037 Emerging Draft –

Part A – This will be filled in with details of the Clerk and Greenham Parish Council

Part B

Section One

Policy or site Ref – N/A

Question 1 - No

Question 2 – No comment

Councillors agree to use Question 2 text from Section 1 of the document supplied by TV

This review takes place in the middle of what is an unprecedented set of events that will radically alter the economic life of the country and its neighbours: the Covid-19 pandemic; the end of the BREXIT transition period; the enactment of related legislation (Agriculture and Environment Acts); and declaration of a Climate Emergency by both West Berkshire District Council and the UK Government. Yet almost all the evidence based upon which the Local Plan policies presented here are derived pre-dates these events.

GPC therefore question whether it is possible to conclude the process of adopting the new Local Plan before further data is gathered on certain aspects. We are proceeding to comment on the Plan with that major *caveat* and urge the Authority to consider an early review of the evidence and categorically state that some aspects of policy will need amending as soon as the impacts of these events are clear.

We refer again to this point in our comments on a number of specific policies.

Question 3 – No comment

Councillors agree to use Question 2 text from Section 1 of the document supplied by TV

GPC would like to see consideration given to an interim review of the newly adopted Local Plan when the impacts of the major changes in context have become clearer in, say, 2024.

In 1.12, we welcome the bringing together of three documents in one. However we are concerned that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and other supporting evidence is not also being actively consulted upon at this time, because in the past it has proved as important to site promoters, developers and the Planning Inspector as the Local Plan itself. In 1.29 you say it “is intended to be an integral part” of this process, yet there has been no attempt to encourage consultees such as local councils to comment on the SA. We see this as a serious omission. Even the Opposition Members on the Planning Advisory Group were unaware until well into the consultation (on 14th Jan) that the SA was published and at the time of writing (19th Jan) there is no sign of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and several other key documents.

Section 2 - Context

No comment, Councillors agree to use Section 2 text from the document supplied by TV

2.6 states “West Berkshire is well connected in transport terms”. This is true of most of the district, however not true of Thatcham, which leads us to question the decision to allocate so many more houses in NE Thatcham. Traffic to and from the main road network (M4 / A34) has to pass through Newbury and this adds to congestion. There is a need for a road link – especially for HGVs – from the east of Thatcham railway station (by bridge over road and canal /river) from A4 to A339 Thornton Road, via New Greenham Park. This could continue between the Swan roundabout south of the River Enborne to link with Newbury bypass at Wash Water.

From this road link, if Sandleford Park (SP 16) is to avoid further congesting both the A339 through Newbury and A343 through Wash Common with traffic that need not use those roads, a local link into Sandleford from the south could be made.

We would like the District Council to consider asking for a grant from the Local Enterprise Partnership which together with CIL contributions from the two strategic housing sites in this Local Plan (Sandleford and NE Thatcham SP 17) could largely pay for this, topped up from the general CIL pot.

Section 3 – Our Vision

The Greenham Parish Council priority, is tackling climate change

Councillors are also concerned about Newbury Town centre and Retail in general are suffering in the current economic climate. The Councillors are concerned that there is not enough emphasis on the environment, reviving town centres and delivery viable communities in the proposed plan. This needs to be included in section 4 Spatial Strategy

Question 1 – No comment, Councillors agree to use Question 1 text from Section 3 of the document supplied by TV

Question 2 – No comment, Councillors agree to use Question 2 text from Section 3 of the document supplied by TV

We strongly support all Strategic Objectives and Objective 1 (Climate Change) in particular but note that for West Berkshire to become carbon neutral by 2030, the contribution from new development will almost certainly need to go further than current national policy requires in terms of environmental sustainability. The stock of existing buildings will be much harder to retro-fit for sustainability in use than is possible with new development.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. This reinforces the imperative of giving very high priority to environmental sustainability in all aspects of the new Local Plan – if necessary, at the expense of economic and even social sustainability. However nothing could be more likely to fail to secure social and economic sustainability than failure to tackle climate change, because all the evidence (e.g. The Stern Report of 2006) indicates that the costs of doing so overall and in the long term will increase unless measures are taken early.

Therefore our approach to achieving this aspect of the Council’s Vision will be to consistently give much greater weight to a development’s contribution to mitigation of climate change than to being “in keeping with the character and distinctiveness of the area”. This applies as much to the AONB as to the rest of the District, where changes implied in the Environment and Agriculture Acts are likely to lead to changes in spatial planning and in the landscape of rural areas of greater impact than in recent decades.

Question 3 – Take out Newbury references, Councillors agree to use Question 3 text from Section 3 of the document supplied by TV

Over the Plan period, even if all new homes are built to zero carbon standards, there will by 2037 be only a small reduction in the overall carbon footprint of the District. New build in any one year seldom accounts for more than 1% of total built stock.

We should be insisting on the highest standards in all new builds and encouraging the opportunity to upgrade and replace poorly insulated and badly maintained buildings, in addition to permitting new build.

Whatever can be done through the planning system by amending this Local Plan should be done, in the interests of sustainability. Our Vision is for West Berkshire to set the national benchmark standard for ‘green prosperity for all’.

Section 4 –Spatial Strategy

Question 1 – Yes, but with a change proposed

Question 2 – Delete current comments. GPC would like to see the creation of viable communities

Question 3 - Changes seeking – To look at the local plan with respect to providing housing to communities to enable them to be sustainable. With the obvious benefits associated with being able to live and work in your community

SP 3 Settlement Hierarchy

Blank site reference

GPC does support this policy

Reason – No comment, as agree with the policy

Change – No comment, as agree with the policy

SP 4 Burghfield

No comment on this section

Section 5 Responding to climate change (SP5)

Greenham Parish does not support this policy

Reason - Would like to see stronger environmental policies. Councillors agree to use Question 2 text from Section 5 of the document supplied by TV

We wish to positively encourage developments whose main purpose is to combat climate change, such as renewable energy projects.

It is not enough that development proposals aim to be themselves carbon neutral. The Local Plan must reflect what is said in the Council’s Environment Strategy: “any carbon dioxide gas emissions within West Berkshire will be balanced with an equivalent of emissions that are either offset or prevented”.

Developments should aim where possible to be carbon positive, to counter-balance the many existing developments – some still being built out – which are carbon negative. Developments that are specifically to provide renewable energy must be encouraged and supported, especially on Council owned land or when community-led to supply nearby settlements. Such developments should be considered as part of the essential infrastructure of the District and able to be part funded by CIL contributions from other developments.

Changes: New local plans should reflect the need to go beyond carbon neutrality, in new developments, in order to meet District wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Ken Neal arrived at 19:57

SP6 Flood Risk

No comment, SP6 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP7 Design principles

Yes, GPC supports this policy without any comments

SP8 Landscape character

Yes, GPC supports this policy without any comments

SP9 Historic Environment

Yes, GPC supports this policy without any comments

SP10 Green Infrastructure

Yes, GPC would like to support this policy

Reasons: Developments in Greenham need to make specific provision for allotments at the earliest stage, in consultation with local councils which have statutory responsibility for providing them but have great difficulty finding land for them.

In neighbouring parishes, there is currently a large waiting list for plots and GPC believe the demand for allotments can only continue to grow as housing densities have increased in recent decades while we now see support for reducing “food miles” and the health and biodiversity value of allotments over that of some other forms of green infrastructure.

Housing developments of more than 100 dwellings with densities greater than 30 should be required to make specific on-site provision for allotments according to the needs of surveys of demand carried out in partnership with surrounding parishes, or to contribute a financial contribution towards off-site provision. All other housing developments should contribute through the parish component of CIL.

SP11 Biodiversity and Geo Diversity

Greenham Parish council support this policy

Reason: Greenham would like to see this policy enhanced. Greenham would also like to see any Bio diversity gains and benefits, felt locally

SP 12 Housing Delivery

GPC does not support policy SP12

Reason: The rules associated with housing allocation are under review and ever changing, which makes it hard to rely on this Housing delivery policy and support it.

SP13 Sites allocated for residential and mixed use

GPC Does not support this policy

Reason: Keep number 2 under changes proposed which refer to deleting RSA5
Delete rest of comments, 1, 3 and 4

SP14 – Sites allocated for residential development in Eastern Area

GPC have no comment on policy SP14 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP15 – Sites allocated for residential development in the AONB

GPC have no comment on policy SP15 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP16 Sandleford

GPC is opposed to this policy.

Reasons: Objections have been submitted from the Sandleford Joint working Group. Please refer to these objections.

SP17 – Thatcham North East Strategic Housing

GPC have no comment on policy, SP17 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP18 – Housing type and mix

GPC is in support of policy SP18

Reason: Greenham Parish Council wishes to strengthen support for community needs housing: including self-build, co-housing, etc. The housing market lacks innovation and fails to meet a wide range of needs.

Greenham Parish Council believes that housing designed mainly by and built for those who intend to live in it themselves is generally of a better quality than what the major volume home builders produce.

SP19 Affordable Housing

GPC strongly supports this policy

Reason: The reference to the need for all affordable housing to be “built to net zero carbon standards” is welcomed. This is provided similar policies are adopted nationally by LPAs, economies of scale for developers should ensure that the cost of making homes both affordable and sustainable in climate terms should not be excessive.

SP20 Economic Development

GPC does do not support the policy

Reason: Covid 19 effects have not been taken into account in the policy, add text from document provided by TV

8:30pm SJ leaves the meeting

SP21 Site Allocated for Economic Dev

GPC have no comment on policy SP21 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP22 Transport

GPC have no comment on policy SP22 to be left blank for the GPC response

SP23 Infrastructure

GPC does do not support the policy

Reason: GPC cannot be expected to comment on this policy until the infrastructure delivery plan is published.

Non strategic Housing

GPC have no comment on this policy to be left blank for the GPC response

Policy DC1 – Development in the Countryside

Add the comment ‘Make an explicit refence to Zero carbon homes’

DC2 – Health and Wellbeing

GPC have no comment on this policy to be left blank for the GPC response

DC3 – Building sustainable Homes and Businesses

GPC Support this policy

Reason: Add comments from TV's document, plus Carbon neutral homes need to be locked in but in addition GPC would like to see houses with a HERP greater than .9 will have the full 40 points awarded, as .9 equals carbon neutrality and therefore delivery any houses that are better than .9, equals a carbon negative house, which is required to 'payback' the carbon emissions generated when building the houses.

DC4 - 13 – GPC have no comment on these policies, to be left blank for the GPC response

DC14 Trees Woodland and Hedgerows

GPC Support this policy

Reason: Whilst the Council supports the planting of trees in the countryside , GPC would like to add that if it is proposed to carry out large scale tree planting within two expected tree heights of an existing development a planning application should be required.

DC15 – Entry level exception schemes

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC16 – Rural Exception Housing

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC17 – Self and Custom Build

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC18 – Specialised Housing

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC19 – Gypsies, travellers and Travelling Showpeople

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC20 – Retention of mobile home parks

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC21 – Residential use of space above shops and offices

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC22 – Housing related to rural workers

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC23 - Conversion and/or re-use of existing redundant / disused buildings

Leave comments as is

DC 24 – Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 25 – Extension of residential curtilages in the countryside

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 26 – Sub-division of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 27 – Residential extensions

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 28 – Residential annexes

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 29 – Residential space standards

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC 30 - Residential amenity

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC31 Designated Employment area

GPC are not supporting the policy

Reason – There isn't an understandable definition of small scale commercial in the proposed policy

Change – GPC would like a definition created to define what is meant by small scale commercial

DC 32 - Supporting the Rural Economy

GPC Support this policy

Comments to be left blank

DC33 – Redevelopment of previously developed land in the countryside

GPC do not support this policy

Reason: GPC would like to add two changes to the policy:

Proposed changes:

- 1) In the first line of the policy delete “existing buildings on”
- 2) Start “i)” with “The land or any existing buildings are …”

D34 – Equestrian/Racecourse industry

GPC do not support this policy

Reason: There has been a significant increase in evening events at Newbury Racecourse that are not related to racing, at the same time as a very large increase in numbers of homes on adjacent land within the Racecourse's ownership. This could harm the amenity of residents who may have been unaware of the frequency and type non-racing activities.

We are also concerned about the more general disregard for the interests of their leaseholders and occupiers exhibited by the Racecourse. Whilst this may not be entirely a planning matter, we believe it has an impact on how future proposals for development by the Racecourse should be regarded.

Change Proposed: Development proposals in support of events not related to the racing industry and likely to occur mainly in evenings or at weekends, must demonstrate community support and sensitivity to noise and traffic impacts on the neighbourhood and highway network.

D35 - Transport infrastructure

Delete A

B – This can be part of a Sustainable community initiative

Reasons – Not required

Change proposed – Last line of delete private car and add ‘active travel means’

- a. In 12.48 of Supporting Text, in last sentence replace “re-use the alignment” with “replace that part”; also delete all after “railway line to provide” and replace with: “...between Hermitage and Newbury, a route for both leisure and potentially commuter use, incorporating existing minor roads and bridle ways as necessary.
 - b. Somewhere in Supporting Text – preferably at the end of first para (12.44) or immediately after it, there needs to be a statement such as:- “At all stages in planning for a major development, proposals should consider ways of reducing the need to travel, especially during the working day. Where possible, all facilities needed on a daily basis should be located within a 15-minute journey time of a new place of employment or residence by means of active travel means. If necessary, facilities should be provided on site.
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DC 36 – Parking & Travel Plans

GPC does not support this policy

Reason: GPC would like to see Parking and travel as two separate issues, not one.

GP would like the creation of individual policies for Parking and Travel plans

Change – To develop separate policies, separately for Parking and Travel

10 To approve GPC comments for Regulation 18 Consultation on the Emerging Draft of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037

Proposed: TV

Seconded: PB

Abstentions: None

Against: None

Resolved: To unanimously approve GPC comments for Regulation 18 Consultation on the Emerging Draft of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037

11 Health and Safety

No comments to note

12 Other items for information or for possible inclusion on a future Agenda

No comments to note

21:30 Planning and Highways committee meeting ended