

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group on Tuesday 11th June 2019

Held in the Yeo Room, Thurlestone Parish Hall

Present: Cllr Sue Crowther (Chair) (SC), Cllr Sian Williams, Richard Boughton, Graham Gilbert, Chris White and Frith Chadwick

In Attendance: Helen Nathanson (Parish Clerk), Ward Cllr Judy Pearce, Parish Cllrs Mitchelmore, Munn and Hurrell, and 5 members of the public

Members of the public were allowed to ask questions or make comments regarding the items on this Agenda at the direction of the Chair. Many questions and discussions took place during the course of the meeting and are recorded below

1. Introduction of members. The Chair explained that Cllr Jack Rhymes had been the Parish Council representative on the Group, but that as both he and Sian Williams were now councillors, Jack had stood down. That vacancy has been filled by Frith Chadwick, who has lived in Thurlestone for 12 years. Frith has expert knowledge of the local housing market, having worked for 15 years for one of our local estate agents. She had also made a valuable contribution to the Housing Market Survey, which appears in the NP evidence base. The other members of the Group introduced themselves.

2. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the NPAG on Tuesday 12th March 2019. The Minutes were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

3. To consider any matters arising from the Minutes. The last meeting was mainly devoted to hearing Bantham Estate's plans for a vineyard and associated buildings. Ahead of today's meeting, the Chair had contacted the Estate Manager for an update and he had explained that plans are on hold at the moment, but that the Estate will be planting vines next year irrespective of Sharpham Wines' plans. As requested, NPAG had provided the Estate with feedback about the possible location of the associated buildings, in the context of the NP. They had concluded that Lower Aunemouth Farm was the least intrusive site on the AONB, Heritage Coast and Undeveloped Coast, and that there are farm buildings there - which appear to be under-utilised and in disrepair - that could be redeveloped/refurbished, whilst recognizing there were access issues that would need to be addressed.

4. Annual Review of the Thurlestone Parish Neighbourhood Plan. On behalf of the Parish Council, the Group is obliged to monitor the NP annually and review its implementation over the Plan period (up to 2034). The NP is a 'living document' and both the Parish and the District Councils are able to make minor amendments to the Plan, subject to mutual agreement. Any material amendments, however, may require public consultation and an independent examination. The NP did precede the JLP, but so far this has not created any issues. *A short power point presentation followed ([attached](#)) which covered the following topics:*

(i) SHDC planning decisions. Since the NP was made, 9 planning applications had been approved which had all been supported by the PC; 2 planning applications had been refused which had both been objected to by the PC; and 1 planning application had been withdrawn which had been objected to by the PC. There are a further 5 applications outstanding (all had passed their target determination date), 4 of which were supported by the PC and 1

objected to by the PC. 3 new applications had already been registered this week. Looking at the planning decisions that had been made, it was noted that there is now consistency in the decision-making between the parish and the district. The planning officers are quoting our NP policies in their reports and on decision notices. We are being listened to. It was noted that there is a message too for prospective applicants, which is to contact the Parish Council or NPAG if unsure of whether their proposal complies with the NP. Details would be treated in confidence and comments would be provided on a 'without prejudice' basis. This should help avoid unnecessary time and costs involved in making an application that is unlikely to succeed because it does not comply with the NP.

(ii) Testing the NP policies. The Chair talked about some of the key policies tested so far:

- **Settlement boundaries.** There has been one planning application for a new market dwelling in the countryside, outside the SB of Thurlestone, and this was refused earlier in the year. The only housing that will be supported by the NP outside the SBs is affordable housing, which includes Community Led Housing but also a Village Housing Initiative (VHI). A VHI is where open market housing is used to cross-subsidise the affordable housing, in accordance with district and national policy.
- **New open market dwellings.** There have been 2 applications for new open market dwellings within the SBs: one in Thurlestone and another in WB. Both are outstanding. They have both had to comply with the findings of our Housing Needs Survey (3-bed max) and both are subject to a S106 principal residence agreement. She and Ward Cllr Pearce have worked closely with SHDC Legal department in achieving a S106 template that is as robust as possible and this template is now in circulation. A question was asked about how rental agreements will work within the S106 Agreement and it was explained that SHDC has agreed a minimum tenancy period of 12 months. Ideally, these properties would be owner-occupied on a permanent basis, but since the Housing Needs Survey found that we needed more private rentals in the parish, it was helpful in this respect. Discussion was also had about potential loopholes in the S106 Agreement, but so far potential applicants seem to be taking the requirement very seriously and no S106 Agreements have been signed as yet. It was noted that breaches need to be reported by members of the community and/or by the Parish Council to SHDC, who would be obliged to enforce against them under the terms of the S106 Agreement.
- **Replacement dwellings.** So far, there has only been one application for a replacement dwelling and this was on the Yarmer Estate in Thurlestone. The proposal was for a 2-bed dormer bungalow to be replaced by a 5-bed house. As this was a one-for-one replacement dwelling there is no principal residence requirement, but the 127% increase in floor area was well in excess of the 25% threshold set out in the NP. The PC objected, the application was withdrawn and the property is back on the market. Discussion followed about the problem the PC now has with assessing new applications because SHDC no longer provides paper copies of application documents, and the plans do not always provide dimensions or a proper indication of scale. This can make it more difficult to make an accurate assessment to inform Parish Council comments on applications.
- **Extensions.** The majority of the applications approved (6) have been for extensions and/or alterations – and some had been particularly challenging. The NP requires extensions to be subordinate in scale and form to the existing dwelling. The difficulty of applying the term 'subordinate' was discussed, as it has potential to be subjective and can be difficult to assess. Extensions are not always straightforward when they are on the edge of a settlement or in the countryside, because they must be considered in the context of the AONB, Heritage Coast and Undeveloped Coast.

(iii) Looking ahead. Proposals for the following two sites would potentially involve loss of employment uses:

- **Garage.** The application to list the garage as an Asset of Community Value had been refused by SHDC and in the representations on the owner's behalf, the point was made that the garage had been operating at a financial loss for the last 6 years and was economically unviable to sustain. However, NPAG is aware of a number of local businesses that would be interested in purchasing the site and continuing its employment use. In terms of change of use, this site comes under Policy TP16.1, which requires it to be marketed at a reasonable market price for at least 12 months and any alternative use would have to benefit the local economy and support a sustainable local community.
- **Care Home.** This former Care Home is currently on the market as a 26-bedroom house. The site comes under Policy TP16.2 and is a C2 (residential institution) Use. A change of use will only be supported by the NP provided the proposal meets the requirements of Policy TP1 and is used to meet local affordable housing (in accordance with Policy TP3). It was pointed out that there is a need for assisted living or supported accommodation within the parish. A suggestion was made that local providers be approached to see if there would be any interest in providing this on the care home site and Cllr Munn agreed to lead on this. It was noted that there is uncertainty in the case of both sites but that any planning applications will be determined in accordance with the development plan of the area (NP and JLP) unless material circumstances dictate otherwise, and that all applications are decided individually on their merits. This means there may be some flexibility, where justified.

(iv) Schemes. NPAG was also tasked with facilitating a number of projects:

- **Biomass:** Chris White explained that this did not happen because it was not viable in the end.
- **Community Wi-Fi:** Chris White described how this project started with the intention of putting Wi-Fi into Bantham and Buckland because there is no mobile phone signal there. It then transpired that there was no signal in order to do this, so the project expanded in order to remedy this, which it has now done. However, the community Wi-Fi in Bantham has still not yet been installed despite several attempts and for several reasons. It is hoped that it will be in place soon.
- **DAAT Landing Site:** The Parish Clerk explained that the project is almost complete but that we are awaiting an MPAN (Meter Point Administration Number) in order to obtain an electricity supply. Once completed, it was suggested that there could be a formal publicised opening of the site, as other parishes have done.
- **Non-designated Heritage Assets:** It was suggested that it would be helpful to make contact with the Council's Heritage Specialist, Richard Gage, about how best to maintain the NP non-designated heritage assets, particularly those on private land. The most pressing concern is the Coronation Boathouse in Bantham, which is falling into disrepair, particularly the figureheads. Cllr Williams is already heading up the Bantham assets on behalf of the Parish Council and will take on board.
- **Avon Estuary** (a new project): It was noted that the Avon Estuary has recently been designated as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), which was welcomed. Graham Gilbert volunteered to attend the forthcoming Aune Conservation Association meeting and to find out more about the MCZ. It was also suggested that local ecologist, Maya Plass, could be invited to come along to a Parish Council meeting to speak to councillors about the new MCZ.
- **Community Led Housing:** The Chair had given a detailed presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting on 1st April 2019 and although there were technical problems with the power

point, the presentation (together with other updates) is available on the parish website in the NP section. She went on to summarise its progress over the past year:

- There were originally 3 sites on offer but only one met with the JLP criteria, which requires sites to be “*adjoining or very near to an existing settlement*”.
- SHDC is at present carrying out initial feasibility studies of the site in West Buckland, focusing on highways, landscape and ecology, and progressing an Option Agreement with Nicholas Johnston, Bantham Estate. Mr Johnston has stipulated that the design must be high quality and the SHDC Landscape Officers have said the same: the high quality in the build will not affect the affordable price of the housing.
- SHDC is aiming at putting in a planning application for the scheme towards the end of the year and it will be subject to public consultation as part of the planning process. The planning application is prepared by SHDC using the Community Housing Fund to pay for the feasibility studies and to purchase an Option over the land from the landowner at £10k per plot. Upon the grant of planning permission, the Option will be exercised, which means SHDC will own the land and Bantham Estate will have no further interest in the land. The entrance to the houses is expected to be the existing farm track, but this will be addressed as part of the planning application.
- The project is limited to 6 x 2/3 bed houses for people with a local connection and there are 6 households who meet that criterion. (There is also a waiting list, should anyone drop out.) The housing will be available at a discounted price as it is subsidised by grant funding from central government (Homes England) and it will remain affordable in perpetuity - so it is not just the first owners who benefit.
- A question was asked about whether or not the houses can be extended to 4-bed properties, if needed in the future. SHDC has said that there would be potential for subdividing rooms and/or extending into the loft, but this will be discussed when the detailed planning starts.
- Another question was asked about the number of potential construction sites coming up in West Buckland and what potential there is to control the timing of these projects so that they do not all take place at the same time in such a small area. This was noted and would need to be taken into account when the planning application is progressed.
- Updates relating to the Community Led Housing are posted on the NP section of the parish website.

5. To note the date of the next meeting to be held on Tuesday 10 September 2019 at 7.30pm.

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Cllr Sue Crowther (Chair)