

Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Group

Minutes of a Meeting Held on Tuesday December 18th 2018

Present

David Ainslie (UBF), Cllr David Casewell (Chairman), Cllr Christine Edwards, Cllr Cornelius Vincent - Enright, Kath Gilbert (UF), Cllr Miranda Jones, Clive Keble (OPUN), Jane Lang (UBF), Cllr Richard Reeve, Mark Shaw (BRA), Margaret Simpson (BRA), Cllr Ron Simpson (Vice Chair), Stephen Taylor (Uppingham School), Howard Thompson (Limes, Firs and Spurs), Janet Thompson (UNF)

Following a proposition from the Chair it was unanimously agreed that Ron Simpson take the minutes of the meeting given the absence of the Town Clerk.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Introductions

David Casewell welcomed everyone to the meeting, reminded all that the meeting was being recorded.

2. Attendance Register and Apologies for Absence

Upon enquiry from the Chair, all present confirmed they had signed the attendance register. Apologies for absence were noted and accepted on behalf of Sharon Aumis, Edward Baines, Pam Dalby, Chris Merricks, Pat Taylor and Phil Wignell.

3. Declarations of Interest and Applications for Dispensation

None

4. To Confirm the Report of the Meeting held on September 20th 2018

Subject to an amendment confirming that Janet Thompson was not from the Scouts, it was moved by David Casewell and seconded by Miranda Jones that the report be confirmed. Unanimously agreed.

5. Democratic 15 Mins - An opportunity for the public to speak

No public present.

6. Neighbourhood Planning Champion Update

Ron Simpson reported briefly that he had been invited by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Locality to be part of a small working group in London which was to advise on the creation of a new N Planning Housing Design Toolkit by international consultants AECOM.

7. To Consider Six Reports from OPUN East Midlands supported by Clive Keble

Clive led Advisory Group Members through each report in turn responding to members questions as he proceeded.

- i. **Census Data/Population** - Relevant issues included the impact of Uppingham School on the town's age profile perhaps masking, in part, an aging population; a propensity for self-employment; the significance of the education sector as an employer in the town and a high percentage of residents without their own car. The strength and character of Uppingham High Street was also noted as was the potential relevance of the report's statistics to the town's future housing needs
- ii. **Local Housing Needs Study** - The paper makes clear that there is a demand for housing of a various types but affordability is a major issue. There is a need to undertake another piece of work to assess the level of the housing need for those in work but on minimum wage. Work currently being undertaken to liaise with developers and landowners to create more affordable homes in Uppingham was noted

- iii. **Local Business Aspirations** - There is a need to recognise the diversity of the Uppingham employment land offer and promote it. The potential impact of substantial development in Corby was noted. A UTC business breakfast meeting to help inform views about Uppingham Gate was considered helpful
- iv. **Roads and Transport** - Points made in discussion included - Developments outside the county will have a significant impact as well as the proposals for the St Georges site ; Another bypass may not be the right answer for Uppingham; Creative thinking about alternative approaches to traffic management on the A6003 may be the best way forward; The Task Group should undertake some qualitative research to gather community views on alternative ways to address the future growth in lorry traffic
- v. **Town Centre Planning History and Proposed Monitoring System** - Discussion included a shared concern about the future of the high street; a recognition that the 'individual' character of the high street is a strength; agreement on the need to preserve existing shop frontages and the need for more diversity in the town's offer to meet the challenge of the internet
- vi. **Suggested Timeline for Review of Neighbourhood Plan and Consultancy Support** - In response to the timeline proposals contained within this paper the Chair agreed that this was perhaps the best moment at which to invite Jane Lang to introduce a paper she had prepared and tabled which contained proposals for the way forward on a number of agenda matters that followed. The tabled paper read as follows:-

“Motion that the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group involves the local community in its deliberations as it prepares a refreshed plan through the holding of a Community Launch Event.

The first Neighbourhood Plan was arrived at through much discussion with local interest groups, and by running surveys in the town with shoppers, visitors and businesses. The output from those groups was deliberated on, and formed into the first Neighbourhood Plan (NP), by representatives of each of the Community Groups who meet regularly.

That meeting was chaired successfully by Edward Baines, a member of Rutland County Council's Planning Committee, and a local business owner. He was able to provide useful input on the County Council's thinking, particularly on Planning, and was able to ensure that our objectives and outcomes aligned with those of the County Council where appropriate. Where the community had highlighted issues where the two plans would not align, Edward made us aware of it, and helped us to explain to RCC the reasons why we took a different approach. Therefore, the NP referenced Rutland County Council's then current Local Plan whilst being creative about how to meet the needs which had been established in the public consultations.

This process was time consuming, as we were starting with a blank sheet of paper. However it had the benefit of producing a great deal of qualitative information, which was used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. I believe the reason why the residents of Uppingham overwhelmingly supported the plan at Referendum because it was their plan, and it reflected their views.

The Neighbourhood Plan subsequently came under the formal remit of the Town Council and the decision was taken by the Town Council to refresh it, as is required under planning guidance (*National Planning and Policy Framework*). Two formal reports have been commissioned from professional contractors, for which fees have been paid using the Town Council budget.

Whilst these reports make a useful contribution in linking Uppingham to the wider picture on Retail, the authors of the report do not appear to have interacted with members of the community during their research. Nor am I aware that any members of the Advisory Committee who are not Council Officers, or members of Community Groups have been asked to review the findings of these reports before formal submission. I am happy to be corrected on this by the Town Clerk and if that is the case I would be grateful if he would obtain from the Consultants a list of local groups, businesses and community members who have been consulted as part of the report drafting.

As a member of the original drafting group, I recognise that the first Plan included more qualitative (opinion) data and less quantitative (numerical) data. This approach followed the Guidance to consult with the Community. I assume that it is in an attempt to redress that balance that the Council's approach to the refresh has been to start to commission technical reports.

I believe it is important that the Advisory Group strikes a balance when considering the opinions of lay people and professionals. Professional input is important when building a robust case, but it should not be the prime driver of what our neighbourhood looks like in 2026. What the community says it wants, and believes it needs, may not be the same in 2019 as it was in 2015. I believe it is important to check back with them to ensure we are travelling in the right direction.

At the moment there are serious concerns held within the community that their voices are not being listened to. These concerns have been evidenced in writing to the Council. The latest decision by the Town Council not to agree to appoint the then committee's nominee Edward Baines as Chairman (despite the Council not putting forward any alternative candidate,) has widened the gulf of trust between the Council and members of the community.

An appropriate method of ensuring a balance of evidence available to the Group, when drawing up the forthcoming draft Plan, would be to consult further with the community and to consider the new information received alongside the professional reports.

It is important that the community's wishes are at the heart of the NP refresh process. I believe we can do this by ensuring that the first concrete step taken in starting that process is community consultation. A Community NP Launch Event should remind Uppingham residents of what was in the original plan, and seek their further input. Such an event should also seek feedback on the most appropriate form of governance, including what role the community wants the Town Council to play in the refresh, and how closely tied to Town Council procedure and control the group should be. I would envisage the source of nomination of a Chairman to form part of that governance discussion

A Community Launch Event must come before any formal announcement of the starting of the refresh process. Until such an event has been held (perhaps as early as February/March 2019), I believe it would not be appropriate to make any recommendations on formally notifying Rutland County Council that the refresh process has started".

Following extensive debate on the paper and its intent, the following motions were proposed, seconded, amended and then voted upon.

Motion 1 (Relates to agenda items 7a and 7b - Timeline and formal notification to RCC)

It is proposed that this Advisory Group recommends to Full Council that formal notification to Rutland County Council of the intention to refresh the Neighbourhood Plan be deferred until the views of the wider community have been gathered via a formal Community Launch Event to be held by the end of February 2019.

Moved by Jane Lang: **Seconded by** Howard Thomson: **Unanimously agreed.**

Clive Keble left the meeting this point following thanks from the Chair for all his hard work.

Motion 2 (Relates to agenda item 7c - Authorship of the new Plan)

It is proposed that this matter be deferred until the next meeting

Moved by Richard Reeve **Seconded by** David Ainslie: **Unanimously agreed**

Motion 3 (Relates to agenda item 7d - The need for more single storey dwellings)

Acknowledging the existing anecdotal evidence, it is proposed that the community's views on this matter be sought as part of the proposed community event

Moved by Richard Reeve **Seconded by** David Ainslie: **Unanimously agreed**

Motion 4 (Relates to agenda item 7e – The need for more single storey dwellings)

Acknowledging the existing anecdotal evidence, it is proposed that the community's views on this matter be sought as part of the proposed community event

Moved by David Ainslie **Seconded by** Mark Shaw: **Unanimously agreed**

8. To Consider the Fourth Draft Rutland Transport, Passenger and Rights of Way Policies

It proposed that the Town Council be recommended to request an extension of the consultation period for one month due to the difficulty of consulting the community over the Christmas period.

Moved by David Ainslie **Seconded by** Christine Edwards: **Unanimously agreed**

8 a) Consider Any Thoughts and Recommendations in Relation To A Bypass for Caldecott from Our Representatives

Christine Edwards and Ron Simpson updated the group on the outputs of the A6003 parish working group which they attend on behalf of UTC. It was agreed to include in these notes the link to the excellent website created by Caldecott representatives. <http://caldecottbypass.strikingly.com/>

9. To Consider the Working Group's Views on the Future Leadership of the Working Group

It was noted that Chris Merricks wishes to put himself forward for Chairman at a future date. Jane Lang then referred to the tabled paper and put forward the following motions followed by debate:

Motion 1

"I propose that this Advisory Group expresses deep disquiet that Uppingham Town Council, in its recent decision, did not support the Committee's nomination of Edward Baines for the role of Chairman".

Moved by Jane Lang **Seconded by** Howard Thompson **Votes for 9 Votes against 5 Motion carried**

Motion 2

"I propose that the formal Neighbourhood Plan Community Launch Event to be held by the end of February, if agreed to be held, should seek feedback on the most appropriate form of governance, the role that the community wants the Town Council to play, and the source of nomination of a Chairman".

Moved by Jane Lang **Seconded by** Howard Thompson **Votes for 10 Votes against 3 Abstentions 1 Motion carried**

Meeting ended at 9.15pm