

Minutes of a meeting held by the Housing Working Party of the NPAG.

Date: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2019

Venue: Members Room at Town Hall

Time: 10am until 11.30 am

Present: Cllr Dick Reeve, Cllr Ron Simpson, Cllr Cornelius Vincent-Enright, Cllr Mark Shaw, Cllr Dave Ainslie and Mrs Margaret Simpson.

1. It was proposed by Dick Reeve and seconded by Mark Shaw that Dave Ainslie be asked to chair the Working Party. Unanimously agreed.
2. The group discussed the housing numbers required to meet the obligations handed down by RCC in the period to 2036. It was noted that this minimum number of new homes had varied over the period since the original NP was made and that the two drafts of the Local Plan produced by RCC had both shown different figures, largely due to the impact of the potential site at St Georges Barracks. The latest figure as shown in the August 2018 Local Plan draft shows a minimum requirement for an additional 184 homes to be built in Uppingham between now and 2036. This figure is over and above those homes currently being built by Bloor Homes in phase one of their development. All agreed that the uncertainty of the St Georges site was not helpful and it was noted that paragraph 65 of the latest National Planning Policy Framework requires local plans to include “a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood plans”. This will mean that future local plans that come forward should include a housing needs figure for designated neighbourhood plan areas and that in the absence of any certainty over this figure it was felt by the group that UTC should formally write to RCC and get a commitment to a firm number in order that we can plan accordingly. The group reached the unanimous decision that our view on the impact of the St George’s site is that we should simply plan what is right for Uppingham rather than get bogged down in different scenarios so for the time being we are continuing to look at 184 as the working *minimum* figure. It was further noted that the latest National Planning Policy Framework does not require Local Planning Authorities to stipulate which kind of housing is required and that it will still be a task of neighbourhood plan groups to explore matters such as housing size, design and tenure requirements. Any Local Plans going to inspection after 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 will be examined in accordance with these new rules. A discussion was also held in the group concerning Spatial Strategy RPL3 as shown in the August 2018 draft of the Local Plan where it was noted with pleasure that RCC had proposed that *“the town [Uppingham] can accommodate moderate growth primarily on allocated sites where development will have the least impact on the local landscape, in accordance with the intentions of the existing and emerging revised Neighbourhood Plan”*.
3. Having all agreed in the group that the Housing theme in our NP is much more than just numbers, we first carried out a desktop sense check on each site that we are aware of to ensure that we are going to hit the minimum of 184 homes in the allotted timescale. Our methodology was based upon the personal knowledge and judgement of the group members from conversations that they had held with the various developers either in their roles as Councillors or through membership of the Vanguard Board. In the existing NP there were three main sites allocated for housing. Site A is the small site to the North Side of

Leicester Road (shown on the map on page 32 of the existing NP which is reproduced at the end of this note). It is 0.46 hectares and is allocated for up to 14 dwellings. It was considered by the group that there should be no amendments made in the refreshed NP in respect of this site. Site B lies adjacent to site A on the North of Leicester Road and totals 5.45 hectares. The existing NP supports initially developing 3 hectares (shown in pink on the map at page 32 of the NP) in the period up to 2026 with the remainder of the site (shown in red) to be potentially developed in the following 10 years to 2036. It was noted that there had been some ongoing discussions between the landowners agents and the Town Council that had resulted in an independent design review (as required by the existing NP) but that these discussions had not followed the spirit of the existing NP as the agent was seeking up to 150 homes on this site (and on part of site C now redesignated as LPR/UPP/07) and with a non-cluster based masterplan. For the purposes of the refreshed NP it was felt by the group that the requirements of the existing NP must be robustly defended and it was thought that a more feasible outcome would be to consider that up to 75 dwellings could be delivered by this proposal in the stated timescales. The group thought that it might even be appropriate to consider no longer retaining the “reserve” land (shown in red on the map) for the refreshed NP given that the overall housing numbers requirement had now dropped so dramatically and there was a desire to see a more balanced approach to achieving this, especially around house types and size. Site C (which is in the ownership of two different parties) located on the south of Leicester Road comprises of approximately 4.5 hectares of which 3 acres (pink on the map at page 32 of the NP) was considered suitable for development for up to 75 dwellings. In reality this site has now been developed by Bloor Homes and because of its commercial success they have applied for and received planning permission to complete up to 104 homes (75 + 29). These are counted already in the RCC draft Local Plan of August 2018 as part of the stated commitments figure of 112 and so there are no more additional properties to come from site C apart from a few potentially from LPR/UPP/07 as discussed above. In summary the group felt that a realistic appraisal of likely numbers from the existing NP was therefore around 89.

4. Discussion then turned to what additional sites might be considered in the refreshed NP to assist with getting the correct numbers and, more importantly, the right types of properties. At this stage reference was made by the group to the work done by the OPUN group for the Town Council and in particular the Local Housing Needs Assessment (designated as Paper 2). From this we noted the following key points: *There is a requirement for new affordable housing; there is a statistical demand for commercial 2 and 3 bed units and; there is no specific market provision of single level units, as either bungalows or apartments.* This led to the group to commend the work being done by the newly formed Uppingham Homes Community Land Trust to provide up to 8 dwellings (6 x 1 bedroom apartments and 2 x 2-bedroom semi-detached houses) on a truly affordable basis. It was therefore decided by the group to recommend that the site on Seaton Road designated for this development be included within the refreshed Neighbourhood Plan. Similarly, the group welcomed the proposal by Mr Lawrence Fenelon to build up to 5 affordable properties at his site which is designated as LPR/UPP/03 and it was decided by the group to recommend that this site be included within the refreshed Neighbourhood Plan. Turning to the need for bungalows, in particular the group felt that although good discussions had been held with the developers at the site designated as LPR/UPP/05 there were serious reservations concerning access to the site. Nevertheless, the group recognised that it was difficult to get developers to commit to building bungalows and so decided to recommend that due consideration be given to including part of this site in the refreshed NP provided that it was restricted to

bungalows and a nominal figure for now of 25 such properties has been included in our calculations pending an appropriate resolution of the access issue. It was also decided that any future discussions regarding bungalows should include a mix of 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom properties with more being of the smaller capacity. Continuing with the theme of bungalows, the group discussed the stated desire of the agent for Uppingham Gate (site LPR/UPP/02) to be allowed to develop some housing on what is primarily designated as employment land. The matter of mixed use was addressed by the OPUN work in May 2018 which concluded the site “*should become a mixed-use allocation, with master planning to secure an appropriate mix of uses (including specialist housing)...*” Given the proximity of this site to the doctor’s surgery, the group felt that an appropriate type of specialist housing would be bungalows and again we have nominally allowed for 25 such properties in our calculations. This therefore takes the total number of newly identified dwellings to potentially 61, which added to the 89 identified in the existing NP gives a potential figure of 150. Obviously this is still short of the 184 required and so the group also considered the site on Leicester Road by the Cricket Club (LPR/UPP/04) being promoted by Langton Developments Ltd. This is a site of potentially 8.4 hectares but the group was very conscious of the need to maintain the possible route of a future link road and so was of the opinion that a recommendation could be made to restrict the initial allocation on this site to 3 hectares which would allow for around 75 dwellings. Again, housing type and design will be paramount and we consider that any properties built on this site should be in accordance with our Housing Needs Survey with larger properties at the front of the site (in keeping with the established street scene) and smaller properties deeper into the site. We are also looking for an innovative approach from all the developers to donate some small parcels of land for self-build and community led housing. The group was also of the view that we would be happy to receive any expressions of interest from developers/land owners to donate land for sports pitches.

5. Taking all the likely figures together (89 from the existing NP and now 136 additionally from the refreshed NP) we have come to an indicative figure of a plan that would provide 225 new homes between now and 2036. We believe that we have been equitable to all those developers/land owners who have shown an interest in helping the future of Uppingham, whilst remaining completely loyal to the concepts of Neighbourhood Planning.
6. The next stage will be to present these thoughts to the full NPAG on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with a recommendation that if approved we move to update Uppingham Town Council and the developers/land owners before moving to seeking formal feedback from the community (as required by the Neighbourhood Planning process). Overall we now need developers to come forward with detailed proposals and timescales as we will be seeking the views of our residents as to which sites get chosen for inclusion in the refreshed Neighbourhood Plan.

Notes prepared by Cllr Dave Ainslie

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019.

