

MINUTES of the NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Held at Epping Hall, St Johns Road, Epping on **Thursday, 23rd September 2021** at **19.30 hours**.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Cllr N Avey (Chairman)
Cllr M Wright (Vice Chairman and Mayor)
Cllr B Scruton (Deputy Mayor)

RESIDENT STAKEHOLDERS:

Tim Valder-Hogg

COUNCILLORS ASSISTING:

Cllr S Baker and Cllr J Whitehouse

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Margaret Emmens, Charlie Geddes,
Fiona Martin and Peter Murray

OFFICER(S):

Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)
Geraldine Vallis (Planning & Events Officer)
Martin Small (Neighbourhood Planning expert)

IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public was present.

194 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Cllr C McCredie.

195 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

(ATTACHMENT A)

Charlie Geddes confirmed there was an amendment to the minutes. On page six, the green space mentioned was old pastures which is a parcel of land owned by Croudace Development, not Epping Town Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC) Meeting held on Thursday, 23rd September 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a true record and adopted by the Council.

196 EFDC LOCAL PLAN MAIN MODIFICATIONS CONSULTATION (ATTACHMENT B)

The Town Clerk thanked everyone who inputted into the Main Modifications consultation. She said that there were many common themes and it has all been combined and submitted to Epping Forest District Council. The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for co-ordinating this piece of work.

197 CURRENT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chairman handed over to Martin to talk about the Neighbourhood Plan. Martin said that the Main Modifications is the primary requirement and with this draft stage will follow the finalised Local Plan. The Epping Neighbourhood Plan can increase the amount of housing in the plan but can't decrease from what is in the Local Plan. Martin suggested

that now the Local Plan has been changed, the Epping Neighbourhood Plan will need have amendments on every page, for example housing numbers from 1,000 to 709. Martin said that the key area is Policy 3 which is the New Development but the Committee would need to look at each section of all the policies. Martin suggested the Committee looking at the heading of the document line by line and making the changes. Martin said he could cross reference after the initial changes.

Policy 1 Protection of the Forest and the Green Belt

Martin suggested putting in Epping green ways and alternative green spaces to be provided or SANS (Sustainable Alternative Natural Space). Martin suggested not encouraging visitors to the Forest and looking at alternatives. It was suggested looking at the number of designated greens spaces and discussed SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) rather than forest. It was questioned that people will still need to have access to the forest for visitors and more to look for alternatives for people who live in Epping to walk dogs using alternatives. Other comments were:

- Enhancing travel paths
- New housing to have new existing other green spaces
- Equal prominence to the Essex Way
- Open to other spaces

The Town Clerk said that she had put a list of green spaces which would be worthy to go in the plan. Some of the list are owned or managed by Epping Town Council and a few are not but have open protection in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. It was questioned whether designated spaces were different to additional open land function and if their value was sustainable and should get protected. It was commented that these spaces are protected so can't be built on it. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to put these in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy 2 Protect and Enhance Open Space within the Parish

Martin said that the Committee needs to look at this policy in the round, for example the sports ground would have no pavilion built on it if appropriate. Another example would be green fields turned into housing but there is no total embargo against development. It was suggested that Epping Forest District Council have two SANGS in the Local Plan, one existing space and one that is owned by the Woodland Trust where the sculpture of the hill fort is located. This existing open space would enhance access to it and make it better to open up. Martin said that it is a new space not an existing space. Another example given was the developer who owns Old Pastures where it could be enhanced to carry capacity and qualify as a SANG so long as Epping Forest District Council supports this. Martin said that the new Planning Statement in the Queen's Speech confirmed that DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) with the development approach would have all green spaces and national parks would come under one authority. This would be in addition to the Areas of National Beauty and would become a natural resource for the public backed by funding. Martin said that the net gain would be the bio diversity which would be gauged and developers would need to provide bat boxes, newt ponds etc and be used as a developer's tool. Martin said that that bio-diversity would not be allowed to the existing spaces to increase bio-diversity. For example land at Stonards Hill, which is a country park on half the site which would add to bio-diversity. It was suggested including SANGs in this listed policy but it would be for Epping Forest District Council who would work with developers, not Epping Town Council or the

Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee. Martin suggested protecting these through green space and include in the wording of Policy 2.

The Town Clerk commented that she had produced a list of 18 areas within the Green Belt which are already protected using the Green Spaces Toolkit. Martin said that to choose areas which would come under pressure from development, protecting its value and dodgy ownership. Martin suggested doing an Environmental Audit and Assessment to include what was found in 2021/22 to include that comes under Epping Forest District Council. It was also suggested taking any other which maybe include if bio-diversity or for example trees on pavement roads. Martin said that for example Milton Keynes have important corridors and pocket parks being valuable with greenery and wildlife. It was suggested including field boundaries which may come under threat including hedgerows, developments general rather than name them.

The Town Clerk went through the list of 18 areas selected in the Green Spaces Toolkit she had used and it was discussed whether to include them in the Neighbourhood Plan. She said that they were open spaces which should be protected. It was AGREED to include as follows:

- Stonards Hill Recreation Ground (protected by covenant)
- Lower Swaines Recreation Ground
- Frampton Road Recreation Ground
- Ivy Chimneys Recreation Ground
- Brook Road Recreation Ground
- Parklands, Coopersale
- Lovelocks Meadow
- Meadow Road Allotment (which have statutory protection)

Martin said that these are attractions away from the forest and is an amenity for residents provided in Epping Neighbourhood Plan, not the Local Plan.

- Lower Bury Lane Allotments
- Bury Lane Cemetery (to be mentioned)
- Swaines Green which is split ownership and covered under the Epping Forest Act 1878 but could be sold by City of London at a later date
- St John's Playing Fields – Martin said that as this is an education site, it maybe excluded from green space but will check this.
- Epping Tennis, Cricket, Bowls Clubs
- Epping Foresters Cricket Club – (Forest land which is safe but to be mentioned)

Martin said that the focus should be on spaces which have less protection given to them and suggested mentioning not Designated Green Spaces.

- Coopersale Cricket Club
- Old Pastures (owned by developer)

Other areas discussed were:

- Stonards Farm land which is land west of Stonards Hill
- Wooded area by Lindsey Street near Frampton Playing Fields
- Western Avenue, Centre Avenue and Wintry Park
- Town Greens

Martin said that Epping Forest's Local Plan will be reviewed in future and by identifying sites now would be good to include in the Epping Neighbourhood Plan. Planning applications would be assessed against these policies. He said these can be farmer's fields, Green Belt or forest area which are important open spaces. Martin said he would work on the details if the Committee came back to add extra sites.

Martin said that the guide of 709 new homes is over the lifetime of the Local Plan. The Epping Neighbourhood Plan can identify sites before the Local Plan changes.

Policy 3 Development Proposals

Martin said that St John's site has been changed from 34 flats (now 186 flats) and the other changes such as to check Bakers Lane which is now going to be the Sports Centre. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Local Plan does not take the Qualis proposals into account of five sites including St John's, Sports Centre now housing, Bakers Lane, Cottis Lane, Civic Offices with housing at the back. It was mentioned that planning applications now include more housing while Qualis have popped up with these applications. Other comments were Epping being a family town which needs to be protected from one bedroom flats; Qualis says community is not fit in with what is wanted in the Neighbourhood Plan. There was mention of changes to the train station including post-Covid with a decrease in the types of four and five bedroom houses.

Policy 10 St Johns Martin said this is an aspiration as it has been overtaken by events. Martin said that the emerging Neighbourhood plan should give weight to the Planning in terms of aspirations which is not the same as the pool and cinema which is not on one site of St Johns.

It was questioned why what Qualis is doing would take away from South Epping to how it would move the numbers which is the same timing as the Local Plan. It was commented that Qualis has looked at statistics for Epping which confirms there is a need for one bedroom flats. It was compared to the Neighbourhood Plan consultation (five years ago) which had a high response rate with pool, cinema, family homes, no hotel and multi-storey car parking. Martin said that two separate surveys were done in 2016 which could be the national statistic of a lack of smaller units. It was commented that there was still need for family homes. There was reference to Planning Appeals; how many houses in the Local Plan area which is a planned dejection and growth for the speed and type of grounds for Appeal.

Martin said that this is a good start where Qualis is building rather than on green spaces. It was commented that Epping Forest District Council seem to be putting housing current site types of one-bedroom units, not family homes. Other references were that agreement were not added new sites; Qualis makes money and based on numbers with high intensity of development on Brownfield sites. Other comments were that family homes should be a mixture of three and four bedroom houses but not exclude one bedroom homes too; get on the property ladder in the first place. It was suggested that the numbers should be counted off the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Martin said that there is a dilemma with every site being one bedroom flats and the Committee need to take the existing Policy 3 and the minimum numbers which is greater than 450 for South Epping and match with the Local Plan in the round.

Another comment was affordable housing is necessary which should be an emphasis for housing mixture.

It was confirmed that St Johns and the other sites will be going ahead with the one bedroom homes. It was confirmed that there are some family homes on the old sports centre. There was question whether St Johns site should have all one bedroom houses and Epping Town

Council had specified that a majority should be family housing as there is evidence that is what is wanted.

Martin suggested putting in Policy 3 that developments close to the town centre should be small units and away from the town centre to have family homes; not use the survey from four or five years ago.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there would be 350 units across three of the Qualis sites. However, there are other sites such as Falconry Court, Bakers Lane where there are 300 planned for these office buildings. These would be possibly 709 total outside the Local Plan.

Martin said that there is scope to refuse outside the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan but can't for example see a reduction to 200 for South Epping. Martin said that 450 has been rubber stamped to happen for South Epping. It was questioned why planners such as Qualis are not taking the numbers against the Local Plan. Martin said that there is no cap on development.

Martin said that Epping Forest has the Special Area of Conservation so that if there is an excess of 709 built during the planning period, this would be in breach of EU legislation. Martin said that the redevelopment of the station, with flats realignment, car parking and coach parking.

Policy 6: This development has been dropped in the Local Plan which needs to be amended in Policy 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan 89 flats.

Martin advised that the Committee needs to go with the Local Plan, drop the station in order to achieve the numbers. It was confirmed that London Underground objected to the development. Martin suggesting putting the aspirational elements of enhancing the Epping station in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy 4: Martin advised that Policy 4 should be kept in the Epping Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy 5: Martin advised leaving the numbers of 450 in South Epping.

The Town Clerk said that Epping Forest District Council had invited Epping Town Council to only one meeting to discuss masterplanning in South Epping. The South Epping meeting there was discussion about the provision and enhancing provision of the school on the site. Martin said that a development of over 250 homes should trigger a new primary school according to an Essex County Council document.

Policy 6: Martin advised enhancements, retainments and aspirations of brownfield sites and builders merchants site, keep as it is. Martin also advised changing to 'the enhancement works with development possible in the future.'

Aspirations Page 19: Martin advised to leave as is.

Policy 7: Car parking provision. It was confirmed that Bakers Lane will not be a car park and Cottis Lane is a multi-storey so will be a replacement that has been lost in Bakers Lane to the Sports Centre. It was questioned why and it was confirmed that it was a move to a sustainable transport in the next 15-20 years using other modes of transport such as cycling, walking, other transport. It was suggested this will change with taxation. Other comments where not enough car parking spaces in Epping; electric buses, more sustainable; car sharing in future; car hire for weekend. Martin advised that the Committee can't include new car

parking in the Epping Neighbourhood Plan. Martin suggested adding a section where Epping Town Council could reach an agreement with an authority to look after car parking. Other comments given were resident parking schemes which are not good for visitors.

Policy 6: Martin suggested changing to footpaths to green spaces to meet requirements.

Section 7: Epping Town Council Page 25 policies Epping Town Council, St Johns Shopfront Improvements Martin confirmed that changing the use of properties without seeking permission, this can't be controlled.

Policy 9: Martin advised that the aspiration in the last paragraph of 70% which now should be an aspiration and not a policy. Martin advised that residential at ground floor, can be controlled. Martin said that ground floor frontages are C Class and not E Class.

Policy 10: Martin advised that St Johns redevelopment should include an updated version. Town Clerk and Planning & Events Officer to look at this.

Policy 11: Martin said that there is an old Change of Use Order included which needs to be updated. Martin advised that this is a tricky policy as town centres are wondering what the best plan will be given the popularity of buying online. Martin suggested that town centres will be places for events in the future; people gather together other than for shopping; maybe services; more social reasons. It was suggested that the Monday Market will be part of the event attraction for shopping; with small shops; niche businesses coming back, for example 14 nail bars, cafes etc must be working. It was advised that Epping serves Coopersale and a long way to Epping. It was commented that Epping is a vitality town and people go to Epping instead of Harlow. A tagline 'Traditional Market Town for the area' was suggested. Other comments were connectivity improvements; better bus and coach transport and community buses.

Policy 12: Shop Front Improvements Martin said that this is the same as the Local Plan.

Policy 13: - Employment Martin said that this section is in general terms.

Policy 14: Enhancing Social, Sporting, Play, Cultural and Community Facilities Martin said that this needs to be updated where go and who provide, maybe cinema in Cottis Lane to be agreed. The Town Clerk said that she would update this.

Section 10: Martin said that this remains unchanged.

Policy 16: Martin said that the wording in Policy 16 allows the Committee to strengthen this.

Section 11: Martin said that the Local Plan is in line with the policies.

13.4 Action Plan and Infrastructure: Martin said that these need to change after policies and cross reference which he would do. Martin said that these headlines are a good start to amend the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan document.

198 NEXT STEPS

Martin said that once the amendments are made to the Neighbourhood Plan, the Committee would need to wait until the Inspector looks at the Main Modifications of the Local Plan.

Martin said that he couldn't say if it will be in conformity with the Epping Neighbourhood Plan. Martin said that there will be enough certainty of the Main Modifications for this work to continue within the Local Plan which will get rubber stamped to happen. Martin advised that as soon as the Neighbourhood Plan is redrafted, it would need to be agreed; submitted to Epping Forest District Council and go to Referendum. It was discussed when a redraft of the Epping Neighbourhood Plan should be looked at and it was agreed it should be early-mid November.

199 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the the next Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee meeting would be held on **Thursday, 25th November 2021 at 19.30 hours** at Epping Hall.

NB date of next meeting to be circulated to Members not present asap after meeting.

The Chairman, Cllr N Avey, closed the meeting at 21.25 hours.

Signature of Chairman

Date