

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OAKHAM AND BARLEYTHORPE
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
held on 11th. March, 2019 at the Victoria Hall at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Christopher Clark (CC) (chair), Paul Dowse (PD), David Salkeld (DS), Adam Lowe (AL), John Nowell (JN), Chris Marsland (CM) and Michael Hinman (MH) (minutes).

Apologies: Janet Hughes (JH).

In attendance: Steve Kemp (SK) and Simone Landucci (SL) (Open Plan), and Roger Ranson (RR) and Sharon Baker (SB) (Rutland County Council).

Those present introduced themselves.

Review and discussion on the feedback provided as part of the “critical friend” review undertaken by RCC

RR reiterated that the Neighbourhood Plan had to tally with the Local Plan until the former shall have been completed. His view was that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group could proceed with statutory consultee talks under Regulation 14 because RCC's input under Regulation 16 would take place after the local elections which would be held in early May because they would not be stating a position on any issues so as to contravene not commenting upon political issues during the period of purdah which would last from 25th. March until the elections.

RR had derived his critique from the 8th. February version of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, albeit SL had since sent him the March 1st. one and copies of the subsidiary documents. In general, RR thought that there was a need for firmer evidence in certain cases. He considered some of the Plan's housing policies were highly prescriptive and should be made consistent with current RCC policies.

Rutland's small size moreover exaggerated the effect that changes in government requirements made upon housing provision, and the Local Plan had to follow government guidelines. Nationally the country was still not meeting government targets, so the current requirement that the county build 160 units a year could fluctuate in practice between 130 and 180; household size, and how that changed over the years, also affected numbers of dwellings stipulated.

Landscape considerations might mean that houses would be built on sites where the big survey said that they should not be.

Considering all that had been built already, it was debated whether anything more ought to be done at Barleythorpe. RCC saw Barleythorpe in terms of its position in the county's settlement hierarchy rather than what was contained within the parish. CM raised the case of one Hawksmead site in the Local Plan which had not been known to Barleythorpe Parish Council; RR and SB explained that the site had been offered as a potential site for development but that no application had been made.

The Local Plan had been redrafted so that it predicted a need for 325 houses in Oakham during its period, but the number would be affected by what happened in practice at the Saint George's Barracks and Woolfox sites. Development at Saint George's Barracks had, from RCC's viewpoint, not to be to Oakham's or Uppingham's detriment, so some housing was still required in the towns (and larger villages).

NT was concerned lest units be built in anticipation of a population increase that did not happen, so the area would be left with a lot of empty houses, even if the 2011 1,000 dwellings for Oakham and Barleythorpe had already reached around 1,500 on the ground or bespoke. RR reminded those present that allocation figures were a minimum. The big survey's figures came out as 32% of new builds being two- or three-bedroom houses, but RR said that that could not be guaranteed and that a restriction on estate-size to twenty units was not feasible. Housing-needs had changed since the date of the big survey because retirement complexes had been and were being built and envisaged.

In order to obtain hard, non-survey evidence, RR suggested that a housing need assessment package be requested, which it was agreed Open Plan should pursue.

RR then went through the draft Plan's policies as they had appeared in its 8th. February version.

Policy 2 – RR accepted in general the 1st. March version but thought that 2.3 (demonstrate good design solutions) could be tightened up.

Policy 3.3 (No rural exception sites) was not consistent with national practice.

Policy 4.10 (Tim Norton site) – RR doubted that RCC could stipulate that the site was used for car parking rather than housing. As Tim Norton had not responded to a communication from RCC over the Local Plan, the site had not been referred to in that plan.

Policy 5 (Employment and Business Development) – it was council policy to retain sites on the northern side of Oakham for industry and employment, so the Neighbourhood Plan had to observe that aspiration; the type of employment was not to be specified because needs and practices changed.

Policy 6.2 (list of assets) had been removed in the 1st. March version of the Plan.

Policy 9.1 (location of green spaces) – national policy was that areas which were green spaces were given the equivalent of green belt status. The Group had to demonstrate just how significant or special each area was that it had specified. Many were already covered through other criteria, e.g. the “arboretums” beside Burley Park Way were already protected because they formed a *cordon sanitaire* which could not be built upon because they were close to the sewage works. Areas which did not meet the standard of being like green belt were probably covered as green infrastructure; that would include allotments not otherwise protected.

RR thought that the group was making good progress. RCC's Design Officer would examine the Plan's character assessment. The Group should apply for the housing need assessment and contact key stakeholders (RCC could give us a list of names) and green space landowners.

Next Steps

(i) CC had altered the Plan to take account of comments and corrections made by MH, PD and others about its facts, spelling, punctuation and presentation.

(ii) It was agreed to apply for the housing need assessment. Members were mindful that the end result would be some way from what the population had stated in the big survey because it had to take account of national and local policy. NT was drawing up a list of consultees.

Date of Next Meeting

This was provisionally fixed for 2.00 p.m., 21st. March.