**B O R O U G H O F K E T T E R I N G**

**PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE**

**24 June 2010**

**Present:** Councillor Mike Tebbutt (Chair)

Councillors Christopher Lamb, Maurice Bayes, June Derbyshire, Terry Freer, Christopher Groome, Keli Watts and Alison Wiley.

**10.PP.01 APOLOGIES**

None were received.

**10.PP.02** **INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Derbyshire to her first meeting of the Committee.

**10.PP.03 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair.

**10.PP.04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Maurice Bayes, Terry Freer, Christopher Groome and Keli Watts declared personal interests in Item 6 on the Agenda (Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan – Background Reports) as they were all Governors of the Old Grammar School, which owned one of the properties within the red line. Councillor Greg Titcombe also declared a personal interest in the same item as he was a member of the cricket club on Lake Avenue.

**10.PP.05** **PUBLIC SPEAKERS**

The following members of the public declared that they wished to speak under the Council’s Right to Speak Policy:-

Sir Peter Fry - Agenda Item 12, Cranford Parish Plan.

Paul Ansell, on behalf of the Kettering Civic Society – Agenda Item 6, Kettering Town Centre Action Plan.

**10.PP.06 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN – BACKGROUND PAPERS**

A report was submitted which updated Members on the work undertaken through the Suite 16 regeneration programme that informed the preparation of the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and recommended that the reports be published for information, alongside other components of the AAP evidence base.

Members were asked to note that the Transport Strategy had been consulted upon in October/November 2009, the results of which had been reported to the Planning Policy Committee in December 2009. The final Transport Strategy would be enshrined within the AAP Proposed Submission, due to be published in July 2010.

In outlining the report, Members’ attention was drawn to the fact that based on the details presented in the Pell Frischmann Reports outlined in the report and summarised in Appendix 1, the Council had undertaken initial work on viability and was developing an understanding of all the issues associated with the plan’s delivery. Work on deliverability was ongoing and was considered to be commercially sensitive. However, to support the emerging Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP), the Council would produce an overarching Market Commentary on Kettering regeneration projects, which would summarise and set out the potential funding sources and implementation mechanisms that can be used to deliver the vision for the town centre.

Paul Ansell, on behalf of the Kettering Civic Society, addressed the Committee under the Council’s Right to Speak Policy and made the following comments:-

* He had asked at the last meeting that a Design Guide be available as soon as possible to ensure the unique character of the town centre was preserved. He suggested that there should be if possible red slated roofs and that Chris Prout’s illustrations be included in the marketing documents relating to the various schemes.
* In respect of Wadcroft he would like to see a replacement for the pedestrian access lost when Crofts Way was closed. He also expressed concern over types of buildings particularly the quality of affordable housing and appropriate tenants as the wrong mix would not create the correct image to attract larger department stores.
* In respect of the Station Quarter, he had suggested a new roundabout on the western side of the railway to improve access into Lake Avenue, building on the importance and purpose to the town of the conference centre/theatre. However, NCC had confirmed that funding could be not provided for this at the current time.
* In respect of the Cultural Quarter, he did not consider that supermarkets and department stores could be described as ‘cultural’.

Members then made the following comments/questions:-

*Wadcroft*

* If the Pell Frischmann findings were based on preferred options from 2008, how would they be affected now in terms of commercial viability with a much worsened state of the market since that period? Officers assured Members that although the information on which findings had been reached was considered to be commercially sensitive, it was much more recent than 2008 and in answer to Members’ concerns there was no reason to assume any future developments had to be based on a Newlands Centre type arrangement.
* What kind of consultation has taken place already with the affected owners within the Wadcroft area and what has been their reaction? It was confirmed that although all landowners had been notified, detailed negotiations had not been undertaken yet as the proposal were only at planning policy stage. The next step was for the Executive to decide on the sequencing of all the schemes detailed in the plan and to access the financial prospects of each one, and identify potential development partners. In addition, because land was included in the red line, did not necessarily mean that the developments would all be done at once. Once the Executive had made decision on sequencing that would be the best time to sit down with affected parties.
* Were there any plans to improve the overall street scene to help maintain Kettering’s good position in retail market, in view of the fact the programme would not come to fruition for quite a few years yet? In response it was confirmed that the street scene improvements would happen once the shape of the development had been agreed.
* In response to a question on parking, it was confirmed that the plans showed a significant increase in parking provision. In a suggestion for making the area ‘quaint’, this would more apply to the Soans Yard scheme and more enquiries for shops in the centre were for bigger units, which were not available in town now.

Members comments were noted and officers agreed that the issues of street cleaning and consultation with land owners would be flagged for further action at the appropriate time once the sequencing of events had been agreed by the Executive.

*Soans Yard*

* In terms of the architecture of Soans Yard, it was confirmed that the brief had been to keep to the original style as much as possible.

*Station Quarter*

* Concern was expressed about the current proposals for the East West connections across the railway, in particular the new independent pedestrian-cycle bridge connecting east and west ‘interceptor’ car parks and the Station Plaza. The main concern was that although the exact positioning of the proposed bridge to accommodate cyclists had been determined, the fact that it would have to be so high to get over the train line, which was on an embankment, which would mean that the crossing could not be used by the elderly, and disabled. Members favoured a sub-way under the embankment but officers confirmed that this would be too costly and a bridge would be the most affordable/feasible option.
* Some Members disagreed that the Wadcroft scheme was the most important scheme in the programme and that the Station Quarter was more or of equal importance because the station was the ‘gateway to the town’.
* Concerns were also expressed over preservation of the Northampton Road Recreation Ground in the proposals.
* Although it was noted that it was unlikely that a university presence would be forthcoming for the station quarter, some form of FE or HE provision could still be acceptable in this area if a case could be made.

Members concerns over the current proposals were noted.

*Cultural Quarter*

* Members accepted the need for replacement uses on the various sites within the quarter which would be vacated by the relocation of police and Borough Council back office uses, which would complement and support the town centre, but expressed concern that an acceptable use had yet to be identified.
* Officers stressed that it was important to understand the relationship between the existing uses and the vitality and viability of the town centre, and the likely relationship between the town centre and possible future uses. This would enable a policy to be developed to ensure that any future redevelopment would have a positive regeneration impact on the town centre. There were currently four options which had been assessed, none of which had been agreed at this stage but several of which showed a net positive or neutral benefit for the town centre.
* In response to concerns expressed about the Municipal Offices, Members were assured that the historic front and wings of the council building would be kept.

Members’ comments were noted.

**RESOLVED** that:-

1. the comments made by Members above be noted

and any actions identified be implemented; and

1. details of the Pell Frischmann reports be published for information.

**10.PP.07 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT (SFRA)**

A report was submitted which informed Members of the findings of the Kettering Town Centre Strategy Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and its implications for the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP); and sought Members agreement to it being used as a background document to inform the Kettering Town Centre AAP.

Members’ concerns were noted in relation to the longer term results in particularly the Northfield Avenue/Northampton Road junction under the bridge where water flow was restricted in heavy downfalls and often resulted in flooding.

**RESOLVED** that the Kettering Town Centre Strategic Flood Risk Assessment be published for information to be used as a background evidence base document for the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan, and for reference for future development proposals within the town centre.

**10.PP.08 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE MINERALS LAND WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT DPD: PROPOSED SUBMISSION CONSULTATION**

A report was submitted which informed Members of the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework – Control and Management of Development Plan Document (DPD) Proposed Submission consultation and to agree a response to the document to be forwarded to Northamptonshire County Council (NCC).

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted and that officers submit a representation to the consultation based on the comments contained in Section 2 of the report, as the response for Kettering Borough Council.

**10.PP.09** **CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT (PPS): PLANNING FOR A LOW CARBON FUTURE**

A report was submitted which informed Members of a the proposed review of Government planning guidance on renewable energy and planning for climate change and sought endorsement of the officers response to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

It was noted that the consultation documents had been produced prior to the General Election and therefore represented the policy commitments of the previous Government. It was not yet clear how the change in Government would effect the progression of the PPS to adopted Government policy.

A short discussion took place on the use of electric cars arising from the comment in paragraph 2.8 that the Council should be supportive of the new draft polity to require charging and parking infrastructure for electric cars to be installed in new developments were appropriate.

Members considered that any possible benefits to the use of electric cars were unfortunately outweighed by the disadvantages such as the long battery charge time (owners would not be able to use short-term parking as too short a time spell) and the inappropriateness of their use for rural locations. The Chair also read out an extract from the Engineering Technology magazine which confirmed a battery charge time of 24 hours.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the Draft PPS: Planning for a Low Carbon Future be noted and the comments provided by officers in response to the consultation, as set out in Appendix 7 to the report be endorsed.

**10.PP.10 PPS: PLANNING FOR A NATURAL AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT - CONSULTATION**

A report was submitted which informed Members of the contents of the Draft PPS: Planning for Natural and Healthy Environment, and sought endorsement of officers responses to consultation questions sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Members made the following comments:-

* In respect of flood lights, there were not very many places in Kettering that had them. There as a need to do something better sports wise in the town and cheap enough for residents to take advantage of facilities on offer.
* It should be emphasised that where it can be retained as much green space for recreation as possible should be retained.
* It was interesting trying to put together biodiversity and areas provided for human activity as by their nature there would often be conflict.
* They agreed that it was good that in relation to question 2, the new Coalition Government had removed garden land from the definition of previously developed land.
* The question was asked as to whether the Council should have a more formal approach in respect of the status of green infrastructure strategies when it came to upholding planning applications on appeal and some credence would be welcomed from the Planning Inspector in respect of green infrastructure strategies when making decisions. It was requested that Question 4 of Appendix 8 should be strengthened in relation to this and it was asked how this could be embodied within the document. It was confirmed that a formal strategy could be provided if this was required and officers also agreed to look at providing an overarching strategy and would liaise with Environment colleagues about this.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the above comments, the contents of the Draft PPS: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment be noted and the comments provided by officers in response to the consultation be endorsed.

**10.PP.11 POLICY DOCUMENT FOR PLANNING OBLIGATIONS-OVERVIEW AND CONSULTATION**

A report was submitted which informed Members of the Communities and Local Government consultation on a New Policy Document for Planning Obligations and sought agreement to agree a formal response.

It was noted that as part of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the previous Government introduced new statutory restrictions upon the use of planning obligations to clarify their purpose and to ensure that the two mechanisms could work effectively and complement each other. The final CIL Regulations came into force on 6 April 2010 and in its final form, the policy document was intended to replace the Government’s current policy contained in Circular 5/05: Planning Obligations, and form an annex to the new Development Management Planning Policy Statement.

Members also noted that it was unclear at the current time if the new coalition Government would continue to pursue the use of CIL as its preferred mechanism for securing planning obligations.

The report was discussed and Members expressed concern that the advantages of CIL were not easily identifiable and asked whether it was a completely transparent process.

Officers responded that the current view of the Council was that it would remain sceptical whether it would be desirable and/or achievable. However, if a CIL was introduced, it would be transparent as it would be known in advance what the amount was and what the monies could be spent on but a possible disadvantage was that the amounts could be modified by the pressures of partnership working arrangements. It was considered that from a Local Authority viewpoint, what could be achieved from the 106 policy was better than under the CIL arrangements. However, members were assured that there was no obligation to go for CIL at the moment and also there that there no guarantee that the new Government would indeed review it.

**RESOLVED** that the consultation document on a New Policy Document for Planning Obligations be noted and the response to the consultation as detailed at Appendix 9 to the report be approved.

**10.PP.12 CRANFORD PARISH PLAN**

A report was submitted which sought approval of the Cranford Parish Plan and to recommend its adoption as an informal Council Document.

Sir Peter Fry reported that the future of Cranford was of concern to the Parish Council as it had an ageing population and there was a need to encourage younger people into the village. Apart from a public house and a small café there was nothing in the way of services to the people of Cranford. The Plan had been based on the Parish Plan and the Parish Councillor and he were happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Officers reported that the residents of Cranford had decided to prepare the Parish Plan in order to protect the culture of their village whilst mapping out actions needed to guide the development of the village in the light of the following key issues:-

* The impact of the Kettering East urban extension on the village. The Parish Plan was needed to avoid any adverse impact of the proposed urban extension on the village.
* The need for a plan to guide the allocation of funds generated from the planning permission for nearby wind turbines towards the development of neighbouring villages, including Cranford.
* The need to put in place actions to attract younger families into the village.

The report as discussed and Members made the following comments:-

* The difficulty of identifying land for affordable housing, which was acceptable to residents. Officers confirmed that this was an issue and they will work with residents to try and solve this. Sir Peter Fry reported that attempts had been made to put new homes outside the village envelope and that had been refused. He accepted Members’ comments on this matter and acknowledged that many residents were very conservative in their thinking and were not particularly keen on enlargement; however they accepted that this would be needed for the future.
* It was requested that it should be noted that under current Policy 95 of the Local Plan, exception sites for affordable housing in rural areas are allowed and that it was important to make sure that the Council’s Sites Specific Proposals Local Development Document (LDD) addresses the issue of affordable housing in rural areas. Officers confirmed that the Site Specific Proposals LDD would include a review of village boundaries and they would ensure that there would be an assessment of opportunities to allocate specific sites for rural affordable housing.
* The Chairman asked that the wording in the last paragraph of page 4 containing reference to the closure of Junction 10 of the A14 be reworded as appropriate.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the rewording of the last paragraph on page 4, the Cranford Parish Plan be adopted as an informal Council policy document and that officers write to the volunteer steering group congratulating them on the quality of the Parish Plan.

*(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.27 pm)*

Signed ....................................................

Chair