

MINUTES of the NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Held at Epping Hall, St Johns Road, Epping on **Wednesday, 12th August 2021 at 18.30 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, Cllr C McCredie

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Margaret Emmens, Charlie Geddes, Michael Gilmore,
Fiona Martin and Peter Murray

OFFICER(S):

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Two members of the public were present.

143 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Cllr J Duffell, Cllr G Scruton, Cllr J Whitehouse, Barbara Ford, Linda Goodyear Dalton and Margaret Peppiatt.

The Planning & Events Officer confirmed that Margaret Peppiatt is stepping down from the Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee due to personal commitments.

144 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

(ATTACHMENT A)

The Planning & Events Officer confirmed that there were a couple of amendments received from Tim Valder-Hogg. On page six, he suggested that South Epping conservators should be Forest conservators. In addition, under the Next Steps he asked if the position paper had been discussed at the Full Town Council meeting.

The Planning & Events Officer said that the Minutes and draft Neighbourhood Plan went to Full Council after the last Neighbourhood Planning meeting on 8th October 2019. The Planning & Events Officer and Town Clerk then submitted the Neighbourhood Plan to Epping Forest District Council for comment and whether amendments should be made at this stage. The District Council came back with a number of amendments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC) Meeting held on Wednesday, 4th September 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a true record and adopted by the Council.

145 EFDC LOCAL PLAN MAIN MODIFICATIONS CONSULTATION

(ATTACHMENT B)

Martin stated that the Local Plan and Neighbourhood plan need to work in tandem. The Local Plan has reached the final stage, been through examination and the consultation is the

Inspector's comments which are the suggested amendments to make the Local Plan 'sound', acceptable and tested with the National Regulations.

Martin explained that firstly, the consultation is to adopt the Local Plan in this area and give protection against sporadic planning applications from developers. Secondly that the detailed changes to the 200 pages is the broadly proposed Epping environmental impact area, the forest had too many units proposed and is now in the region of 700. One site is eliminated and South Epping has gone from 900 to 450 through recommendations from the Inspector. The two car park sites brings the capacity and moved extra development further north to Harlow adjoining districts. He said that some developments are proposed but not as much as anticipated.

Martin said to note that the material environmental impacts as regards pollution with visitors to Epping Forest and proof negligible or nil impact, are not improved. This would be a yardstick for future developments and the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan will be what's acceptable. There is the deletion of the railway station which will affect the Neighbourhood Plan's proposed coach plan, etc. The Main Modifications looks at the viability of the town centre. There are currently several empty shops in the High Street. There are the proposals for the ground floor use as well as upper floors for residential use to improve the viability of the town centre. South Epping has an interesting impact although not for those that live nearby. Any development in South Epping there does not seem to be the infrastructure forthcoming except non-car links into the town. The initial 900 initially would have connected the bridge with the highway and have implications, facilities, infrastructure, green spaces.

Martin explained that developers would be coming back to increase the development in two or three years. It is necessary to probe the implications for facilities, schools, etc. However if planning applications are not up to scratch, they can be refused. This is the amended Local Plan to be adopted. There have been a couple of recent changes to planning such as the Government's White Paper and Planning related legislation in the Queen's Speech. If these legislation is amended because of this, for example the developer may want to increase numbers on attractive sites. In South Epping, the developer is considering the delivery of the bridge but only the footbridge will be improved for access. The vehicular bridge for the new development will now not be considered. There was concern at the meeting regarding the lack of vehicular bridge given the tight roads of Brook Road and Ivy Chimney. It was asked if the infrastructure could be requested with the development and put into the Epping Neighbourhood Plan to safeguard but Martin confirmed that this could not be included. Martin said that he would check the vehicular bridge information on the Main Modifications consultation of the Local Plan.

There was concern at the meeting that if the road has an over capacity there would be school safety at risk and even though there was a makeover with parking bays, it was felt that the problem would be made worse.

There was also concern about the footbridge over the railway line which was allegedly filthy and maybe unsafe with no handrail so would not be able to take any kind of capacity.

Martin said that the Committee can only respond to the information given in the Main Modifications consultation. Martin commented that the South Epping Health Centre GP has been deleted on the Main Modifications.

There was concern at the meeting that residents would have to travel up the hill to the GP centre or to the far end of town. Martin suggested putting the GP surgery on the comments to the Local Plan consultation.

It was suggested that the school headteacher there needs to know how to budget, would they be relocated, expanded, etc and would need clarification.

Martin said that he heard there would be a redevelopment of the Central Line to take it to Harlow but it was felt at the meeting that Transport for London would be unlikely to extend this line. There is also suggestion that the disused railway would be turned into a tramline.

Martin said that both the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan need to consider school and GP surgery and the relevant Essex County Council and West Essex Care Commissioning Group (WECCG) organisations need to look into this. Martin said that this is even more important with the numbers of units at the St John's development.

It was noted that more digital technology could be used instead of GP surgery facilities.

It was pointed out that on page 107 on the Main Modifications document, for South Epping, there were community, health, employment, retail and other facilities to be provided. Martin said that in March 2020, there was a document which developers used regarding information on a new school and to increase development. If there is an additional or new primary school, it would need to be in the Local Plan. It must be appropriate for community health facilities and a new primary school. There will not be a vehicular bridge for 450 homes either side of the railway line. Martin said that the Committee would need to persevere with the system or send a letter and Epping Town Council are making a response to the Main Modifications.

There was concern at the meeting that the roads will be overloaded and more volume of traffic down the road.

It was suggested that residents could look at the Epping Town Council response as the more responses sent the better. It was also suggested about promoting the consultation to residents.

The Town Clerk confirmed that she could summarise key points for the public to make them aware with a summary of two to four pages.

Martin suggested that the information in the response needs to meet the 'sound' criteria and give for example alternative green spaces other than using the Forest.

Martin said that the Inspector will be looking for issues of substance, not views or opinions, for example such as fundamental problems such as a traffic count.

Martin also said that the Inspector will be looking for issues such as air quality, charging people for driving in the forest. It is necessary to look at criteria and give green space details, cost of new sites, etc. Martin said that the impact on the Forest needs to be lowered to zero for existing and new people to visit and look at key ways to improve to have good quality, green spaces. Martin suggested examples of sustainable alternative green spaces with aspects such as water in a lake or a hill view.

Other suggestions Martin had would be that they had easily accessible cycle ways, bus links, etc which would be alternative to Epping Forest and other routes. Martin said that South

Epping did not have enough alternative green space as one of the routes leads into Epping Forest. It was highlighted the problems of dog mess, and the trees wider impact on the Forest. It was felt that the Forest would struggle with additional number of homes, and East Epping has green space which hasn't been looked at.

Martin said that the Main Modifications is an examination that needs to put more in rather than don't like it. Martin suggest that there should be evidence and disregarding figures should be less. Martin suggested that the evidence disregarding figures should be less. It was AGREED that Epping Town Council would do a draft for the public. It was agreed that there would be a focus on South Epping, the Forest and clean air. The items that are submitted should be summarised in response and it was felt that it was unfair to expect another Council to do this when there is a Planning Policy Team at EFDC. It was suggested 10 points on an A4 sheet. There was concern that judging from the forest footfall, there was too many tourist attractions at the weekend. It was felt that the Forest is a tourist attraction at weekends and Summer, it was evident that some people come from far away across the river especially to High Beech visitor centre especially cyclists. It was felt that any flats and other developments done should have green spaces to go to when built.

Martin advised that the current town centre developments were not there when the examination was taking place. These implications are not included in the Main Modifications and with the Inspector and EFDC are not proposing changes. The new developments at St John's, Cottis Lane, Bakers Lane and Civic Offices have the go ahead and are included in the 709 numbers.

Martin said that the green spaces are not there. The government are proposing building 300,000 homes each year and there is the White Paper and Queen's Speech on Planning. Martin said that there will be a new system counting homes for the next Local Plan. The strategic housing market system will take employment and other factors and will increase how much 1999/20 cities were lifting the cap and 20 percentage pressure will continue. Martin said that there is an impact of the Forest such as flats not having gardens and cyclists coming from south of the river. Martin said that there will be more developments in future and more people are moving out to the Home Counties. With the Covid situation, people were working from home and this factor has impacted the scenario with a decrease in traffic and not so many commuters.

Martin advised that it would be necessary to formulate a response to the Main Modifications. It was suggested a Petition but Martin said that this would be ignored and an individual response only would seem to be considered. It was suggested the format to be 10 bullet points and resident's name and address.

It was **AGREED** that if the Committee members send comments to the Town Clerk, then everyone's comments will be combined into common themes; Everything Epping Forest would then be asked to publicise the response. It was said that the response would also be put on the ETC website. It was also suggested that it could be available for residents and schools to send to parents. Martin suggested points such as traffic, bridge and cross reference with the Main Modification numbers and policy numbers, for example page 107 useful so gets in right slot. Martin said that the Inspector will focus on particular causes of concern with no detail given for part of the document. It was suggested having headings in a summary, not happening, happening and up for debate in three headings. The Forest will have an impact on omissions CAS across the country through Climate Change. Martin said that there will be unpopular things to reach/aim for, eg diesel cars and lorries to help clean air solutions.

It was suggested looking at the Epping Forest Strategy in 2017. The Town Clerk to report with Town Council's own list and needs clarification.

Martin said that there will be a Climate Forum at EFDC regarding emissions and will need to work together, not political.

Tim Valder-Hogg arrived to the meeting.

146 CURRENT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

(ATTACHMENT C)

Martin said that the Committee are in the final stages in the adoption of the Local Plan. As regards the Neighbourhood Plan, the Committee need to modify the changes from the Local Plan and then submit before adopting. Martin said that the Neighbourhood Plan has to follow in substance to the Local Plan. Martin said that the Committee can allocate an increase in housing, not a decrease. Martin said that once the consultation with the Main Modifications has ended, then alterations to the Neighbourhood Plan should be finalised.

Martin said that the Committee should consider policies to protect the Forest. Martin said that to question whether green spaces are strong enough on page three, need to change the numbers so they match the Local Plan including South Epping.

Martin said that the station development needs to be deleted. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to promote the facilities there. Martin said that policies 9 and 10 need to be looked at so as to maintain the viability of the town centre as a retail and event destination.

Martin said that the Neighbourhood Plan will safeguard the future and need to add green spaces for discussion. Martin said that green spaces need to be identified, what to keep protected including South Epping and especially protect the land from future development. Martin advised taking out green corridors as it promotes people going into the Forest and to put back the land next to the playing fields at Stonards Hill and Bell Common.

Martin said that the Main Modifications will look at non-car transport, better public transport and footpaths. Martin suggested including green spaces as a policy in the Local Plan and list all, keep only designated green corridors. Martin said that green spaces need to be protected, otherwise developers will be back for example to South Epping. It was suggested that South Epping has a public right of way through the foot bridge. It was also suggested having South Epping as a policy, not appendix. Martin advised that the responses to the Main Modifications need to be specific, for example GP surgery, school, appropriate health facilities and choose the words. Martin said that how people access GP surgery services has changed, and moving away from the traditional model. Martin said that it would be useful to know what the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (WECCG) long term plan is. Martin suggested that the District Council should have done this already and it would be useful to identify the document and reference it in the Neighbourhood Plan. Martin said that once these alterations are done and agreed, it could be submitted to Epping Forest District Council for approval and go to referendum. Martin advised to look at the Neighbourhood Plan in the round as a whole, using appropriate words before submitting.

It was asked that in the map in 2017 the South Epping Brook Road playground area was going to be moved. The Town Clerk said that Epping Town Council lease the playground area from Epping Forest District Council and haven't been informed about moving it to another area. It

was questioned if it would be removed to another site and why, could it be identified as a green space and leave as it is. Martin said that the six plots should be in the Neighbourhood Plan as well as allotments, cricket pitches, etc. It was suggested that health & wellbeing in Main Modifications document and none in Stonards Hill, not in Local Plan. Another green space mentioned was old pastures which is a parcel of land owned by Epping Town Council.

147 NEXT STEPS

It was questioned whether the Committee should wait until the Main Modifications response to the Local Plan is done and adopted before modifying the Neighbourhood Plan. Martin advised that it would be better to get the Neighbourhood Plan ready to go when the Local Plan goes.

Martin said that there are housing numbers with issues regarding green spaces. Hopefully the Main Modifications will welcome decreased numbers of units, recognise the deleted expansion of the station, provision of facilities and links to South Epping. Martin said that there is a particular frame needed for the Neighbourhood Plan including the green space issue, welcome the District Council's Local Plan, link to green corridors, footpaths and cycling. The Town Clerk asked Martin if he could put this extra wish list information into Planning language for the response to the Main Modifications which he AGREED.

Martin said that there needs to be justifications for the selected particular sites with well argued basis, green sites and facilities, but not over the top. It was suggested one of the green spaces that go from the town centre that links to South Epping in Coopersale.

Martin said that South Epping school and the number of dwellings for Epping town centre which will have an impact on Epping Primary School and St John's Secondary School which should be included in the comments.

Martin summed up as follows:

- Respond to the Main Modifications Local Plan consultation
- Update the Neighbourhood Plan
- Look at the latest version of the Neighbourhood Plan in a month's time.
- Respond by then and start setting further adjustments.
- Draft an amended Neighbourhood Plan in September

Martin said that the Main Modifications in the Local Plan could be adopted swiftly. Martin said that another amended Local Plan he is aware of recently had its final stages very quickly.

Martin suggested having the next version of the Neighbourhood Plan version 12 submitted to Epping Forest District Council by the end of the year and then organise a referendum.

The Town Clerk said that the final Main Modifications Consultation will go to Full Council on the 14th September so requested submitting comments by email on Friday, 20th August as the deadline. The Town Clerk would then arrange for the comments to be promoted to other residents once finalised. It was agreed to arrange a further Neighbourhood Planning meeting after the Town Council's Full Council meeting on Tuesday, 14th September.

148 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the the next Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee meeting would be held on **Thursday, 30th September 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 20.00 hours.

Signature of Chairman

Date