

Flitwick Town Council

Minutes of the 340th Meeting of the Planning Committee held on Thursday 17th September 2020 at the Rufus Centre

Open Forum

There were no items.

Committee Members Present :- Councillor J Dann
Councillor P Dodds (Chairman)
Councillor P Earles
Councillor M Platt (Vice Chairman)
Councillor R Shaw

Also in Attendance :- Town Clerk
Amenities Officer

2702 To note declaration of interest on Agenda Items

Cllr Dodds declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 5.3.

2703 To Accept Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received from Cllr Halligan.

2704 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised Members that he had taken part in discussions with the Town Clerk regarding a Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick. Further information would be presented at the next meeting.

2705 Minutes

Cllr Shaw commented that he did not attend the meeting on 27th August due to an email he had received stating the meeting had been cancelled. The Chairman advised this had been sent in error and agreed to amend the minutes to reflect this.

All Members agreed the minutes were a true recording of the meeting held on 27th August 2020.

2706 Planning applications for consideration

2706- 1	20/00457/TRE	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	TRE
	Applicant Name :-	Mr Andrew Woolgar	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	12 Woburn Close Flitwick Beds MK45 1TE	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Works to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order: Prune 2 Lime Trees and 1 Maple Tree.		
	Observations :	FTC - Support, subject to approval from Tree Officer Vote: All in favour		
2706- 2	20/02133/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mrs Jocelyn Smith	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	6a Pilgrims Close Flitwick Beds MK45 1UL	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Covert garage into living space with infill between existing house and garage and loft extension.		

Observations : FTC - Support
Vote: All in favour

2706- 3	20/02857/LDC	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	LDC
	Applicant Name :-	Mr Stanley Reid	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	1 Buttermere Close Flitwick Beds MK45 1NG	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Lawful Development Certificate Existing: detached studio/dwelling		
	Observations :	FTC - Object Members felt that further information was required such as proof of sanitary facilities and whether change of use was granted. Vote: 4 in favour, 1 abstention		

2706- 4	20/02927/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mr & Mrs Garraway	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	50 Dunstable Road Flitwick Beds MK45 1HU	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Proposed demolition of existing conservatory and erection of single storey side/rear extensions. Fenestration revisions to front elevation and new canopy to garden room.		
	Observations :	FTC - Support Vote: All in favour		

2706- 5	20/02946/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mr Clive Bratt	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	17 Astwood Drive Flitwick Beds MK45 1EN	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Two storey side extension and associated alteration works including new rear dormer.		
	Observations :	FTC - Support Vote: All in favour		

2706- 6	20/02969/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Site Supervision Ltd	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	Lnd between 24&26 Trafalgar Dr Flitwick Beds MK45 1EF	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	New 3 bedroom detached house.		
	Observations :	FTC - Support Vote: All in favour		

2706- 7	20/02987/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mr Dave Thorne	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	12 Ennerdale Path Flitwick Beds	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020

MK45 1NE

Proposal : Single storey front and side extension

Observations : FTC - Object
1. Not in keeping with current street scene
2. Plans not accurate - roof line does not match up
3. Quality of development
Vote: All in favour

2706- 8	20/03068/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	TBC	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	9 Kings Road Flitwick Beds MK45 1ED	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Demolition of existing building and erection of 9 residential apartments.		
	Observations :	FTC - Object 1. Would effect the tree line within the boundary of the Baptist Church 2. Overdevelopment 3. Members felt it would cause loss of character to the centre of Flitwick Vote: 3 in favour, 2 abstentions		

2706- 9	20/03070/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mr J Kelly	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	14 Clover Road Flitwick Beds MK45 1PQ	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	2.75m long drop kerb to front entrance of property		
	Observations :	FTC - Support Vote: 4 in favour, 1 against		

2706- 10	20/03105/FUL	Plot Ref :-	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-	Mr James Wilde	Date Received :-	08/09/2020
	Location :-	13 Townfield Road Flitwick Beds MK45 1JE	Date Returned :-	21/09/2020
	Proposal :	Single storey rear extension to replace existing conservatory		
	Observations :	FTC - Support Vote: All in favour		

2707 To note planning decisions from Central Bedfordshire

Members noted the decisions from Central Bedfordshire Council.

2708 Correspondence received

CBC advised that an appeal had been made for application CB/20/01179/FULL, 16 Chaucer Road, Flitwick.

2709 Highways Matters

Members noted the minutes of the Highways meeting held on 7th September.

2710 MHCLG Planning Consultations

Members agreed to withdraw from submitting a response to the consultations and felt that it was more appropriate for Central Bedfordshire Council.

2711 Questions

There were no questions.

The Meeting closed at : 20.55

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- Flitwick Town Council

NOTIFICATIONS OF PLANNING DECISIONS FROM Central Bedfordshire Council

Minute Ref

Thu 1 October 2020

District Ref

' C ' Contrary to District 'CD' Contrary Delegated
' D ' Delegated
' E ' Endorsed by District 'ED' Endorsed Delegated

Page No : 1

GRANTED PLANNING PERMISSIONS

C 20/02475/FUL Approved
District COMMENT CBC - Approved

22 Hinksley Road
Local COMMENT FTC - Object
Vote: All in favour
1. Not in keeping with the current street scene
2. Overdevelopment of the area
3. Members agreed with comments from the Highways Officer

E 20/02665/FUL Approved

2 Ennerdale Path



The countryside charity Bedfordshire

CPRE Bedfordshire Planning Reforms Briefing

September 2020

Executive Summary

The government announced two consultations in August this year which together, would result in the biggest changes to our planning system since the Town and Country Planning Act was introduced in 1971.

The Planning for the Future White Paper consultation runs until 29th October. Its proposals mean a major upheaval of the planning system. The proposals have prompted widespread opposition across a wide range of interested parties, including local planning authorities of all political hues.

The major concerns include; the fear of a loss of local democracy with local authorities left powerless to prevent developers cherry-picking green field sites whilst leaving brownfield land unused and the likelihood that the proposed reforms would have negative impacts on the delivery of affordable housing and access to green space.

The proposals to introduce a zonal planning system would weaken protection of green space designated for growth or renewal, and offer no additional safeguards for those earmarked for protection.

‘Protected’ areas will be those with site designations such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Conservation Areas, giving no consideration to the importance of undesignated green spaces near to where people live.

The Changes to the current planning system consultation runs until 1st October 2020. The proposed changes are focused on the introduction of a new Standard Method for calculating local housing need for each local authority area, which brazenly abandons an evidence-based approach.

Crispin Truman, chief executive of CPRE, comments that ‘governing by algorithm simply doesn’t work. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and we need many more well designed, genuinely affordable homes, including in rural areas. But combining this algorithm

with far reaching, untested reforms to local planning, could result in irreparable harm to our countryside, without delivering the housing we actually need.'

Whilst the Government professes to want house-building to support the leveling up of the UK economy, the new methodology pushes the highest rates of growth to where existing demand is highest.

In addition, the Government appears to believe that reducing the delivery of affordable housing is a fair price to pay in the short term for boosting the number of homes built by SME developers.

Part 1: Planning White Paper

The government published its Planning for the Future White Paper and Changes to the current planning system consultation on 6 August 2020. Its proposals mean a major upheaval of the planning system. CPRE has a long history of engaging with planning policy since the organisation was founded in 1926, and our vision is for the countryside and green spaces to be accessible to all, rich in nature and to play a crucial role in responding to the climate emergency. A healthy and democratic planning system is crucial to delivering that vision, but these damaging changes threaten our ability to shape the future of where we live.

Widespread opposition

- Over 260,000 people have signed petitions by CPRE, SumOfUs and 38 Degrees in opposition to the government's plans.
- In a poll commissioned by the Built Environment Communications Group (BECG) in September, only 4% of elected councillors stated that they believed the government's proposals would make the planning system more democratic.
- CPRE has convened a coalition of 40+ housing, planning and environmental organisations in opposition to the White Paper.
- A survey of local CPRE groups found that:
 - 83% believe that community voice would be significantly diminished if the proposals are implemented as currently set out.
 - 91% want the government to rewrite either major sections of, or the whole of the White Paper.

Key concerns

CPRE has the following major concerns with the White Paper:

- Loss of local democracy
- Housing affordability
- Access to green space

Loss of local democracy

A crucial feature of the planning system is accountability and the opportunity for communities to feed into plans in their area. The Secretary of State has stressed that local democracy will not be lost in the new system.

However, restricting community engagement to the Local Plan making stage will result in members of the public losing their ability to scrutinise individual planning applications.

This is effectively cutting local democracy in half.

In contrast, developers will only need to successfully influence a local plan and will then have sweeping powers to build however and whenever they like on most sites.

The White Paper proposes a national approach to setting binding housing requirements (there is already a national approach to housing needs forecasts, but it is not binding on local authorities and can be varied according to local circumstances).

This approach, as well as the proposed new forecasting method, is too centralised and does not sufficiently take into account the needs or environmental constraints of local areas. It is also likely to make it more difficult for local authorities to acquire land to build affordable homes, as large developers and land agents will bid prices up for land that is more likely to be developed under the new system.

Much more priority needs to be given to helping local authorities regenerate brownfield sites and build more affordable homes to meet local needs.

Housing affordability in rural areas

Furthermore, developers on small-to-medium sites are currently required to build affordable homes if the site includes more than 10 units.

The White Paper is lifting this cap to 40-50 units. With this proposal expected to remain for a minimum of 18 months, this will leave many areas without the affordable housing needed for some time to come.

The impact of this will be felt most acutely in the countryside and in particular small rural towns, where sites tend to be mostly in this small-to-medium bracket.

This means fewer homes that people of lower incomes, including many key workers, can afford. This proposed short term change (in the Changes to the Planning System consultation) sits in direct contradiction to the longer-term reforms proposed in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper, which repeatedly calls for maintaining and improving the levels of affordable housing.

Access to Green Spaces

A vital purpose of the planning system is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

However, the government's proposals to introduce a zonal planning system would weaken protection of green space designated for growth or renewal, and offer no additional safeguards for those earmarked for protection.

'Protected' areas as defined by the new proposals will be those with site designations such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Conservation Areas, giving no consideration to the importance of undesignated green spaces near to where people live.

It should be noted that Bedford Borough has no areas of Green Belt, no Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) and few Conservation Areas. All of the countryside in Bedford Borough including the River Great Ouse and its Valley Area is undesignated and would be afforded no protection from development under the government's proposed zonal system.

Under the proposed zonal system, and in combination with centralised, high housing targets, these green spaces will be under increased threat of becoming a free-for-all for development. The result of which will be the loss of the crucial functions that green spaces serve to local communities in terms of health and wellbeing, in addition to its role in mitigating the climate emergency.

The full document can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

The consultation closes at 11:45pm on 29 October 2020

Part 2: Changes to the Planning System Consultation

Introduction

CPRE campaigns on planning because it is crucial to empowering local communities and making sustainable, liveable places. Ensuring everyone has a decent home, that meets their needs and that they can afford, is essential to that, and our response concentrates on assessing how we believe the proposals will help or hinder these objectives.

The consultation itself is symptomatic of Government's apparent reluctance for meaningful input. It asks respondents to comment on a wide range of specific details, but doesn't consult on the policy principles that underpin the proposals, despite these being often the most important points people will wish to address.

CPRE recently co-sponsored research by Heriot Watt University that identifies the need for 145,000 genuinely affordable homes to be built in this country for each of the next ten years. That means that in the region of half of all new homes need to be genuinely affordable in perpetuity. Considering that expanding the private housing market to the scale currently envisaged by the Government is very unlikely to be deliverable, then the real need is for a systematic, fair and transparent approach to meeting these affordable needs through public investment.

The "Standard Method" of calculating Housing Need in a Local Authority Area.

The proposed new standard method brazenly abandons an evidence-based approach to determining housing need. It takes three entirely separate baselines – existing stock levels, household projections and affordability ratios, and generates a pick-and-mix formula from them to produce a national figure of 300,000 or 337,000 homes per year. No consideration is given to whether, or for how long, the headline national figure will retain any credibility in the face of changing circumstances.

By doing this, the proposals set up contradictions which undermine the baseline data itself. In particular, the household projections are said to be a robust predictor of future growth trends, unless they don't add up to 300,000 homes per year, in which case they're dismissed as not robust.

The Government professes to want house-building to support the leveling up of the UK economy, but the methodology pushes the highest rates of growth to where existing demand is highest.

The approach to tackle affordability relies on private sector house-builders to build so many additional homes that the price of their products falls, even though this is self-evidently incompatible with their business model.

The affordability adjustment directs house-building where existing housing is least affordable, but prioritises home ownership as the preferred tenure.

By pressing ahead with the First Homes scheme despite warnings from affordable housing experts that it will make matters worse overall for people in need of homes they can afford, the proposals demonstrate that they are driven by ideology, not evidence.

The proposals significantly undermine the long-established use of exception sites to provide for small affordable housing developments, by requiring these to prioritise First Homes rather than genuinely affordable homes. Supposed continuation of existing arrangements for rural areas are not properly explained and do not appear thought through.

The Government appears to believe that reducing the delivery of affordable housing is a fair price to pay in the short term for boosting the number of homes built by SME developers.

We support diversification of the industry, but we cannot agree with that proposition, as it runs directly counter to the need to prioritise affordable tenures.

The full document can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

The consultation closes at: 11:45pm on 1 October 2020

The CPRE Bedfordshire contact for matters arising from this Briefing Paper – Gerry Sansom – gerry.sansom@cprebeds.org.uk

Date issued: 29th September 2020



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Report to Planning Committee 8th October 2020 Neighbourhood Planning

Implications of recommendations

Strategy: Develop a Neighbourhood Plan, seeking more control over local planning issues and providing an effective voice for the council in planning decisions”.

Finance: As set out in the Report.

Equality: Increases inclusivity due to high community involvement

Environment: Protection & enhancement of the environment will feature prominently.

Community Safety: Can be built into Plan.

Scope

This report considers the legislation and guidance concerning neighbourhood planning, the benefits and disadvantages of the Council preparing a plan, as well as costs and available funding.

Background

For local councils, one of the more significant provisions of the Localism Act 2011, is the introduction of the right for communities to shape their local areas through the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood planning allows communities, residents, employees and businesses, to come together through the town council and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like. It can help protect heritage and environmental features which are important locally.

A neighbourhood plan must address the development and use of land. This is because the neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan once it has been made (brought into legal force) by the planning authority. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

These plans can be very simple and concise or go into considerable detail where necessary. Local communities may even be able to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses, making it easier and quicker for development to go ahead. Through a Neighbourhood Development Order, they can help determine where development should go and can decide the type and design of development that can be granted automatic planning permission.

Provided a neighbourhood development plan or order is in line with national planning policy, with the Local Plan policies of Central Bedfordshire Council and with other legal requirements, local people will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority of those who vote, then the local planning authority must bring it into force. Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations came into force on 6th April 2012 and give more detail on how the process is to work.

Introduction

Within Central Bedfordshire, there have been 8 Neighbourhood Plans adopted and 39 designation of areas for a Neighbourhood Plan, (Central Beds Website 30/09/20).

Neighbourhood Plans are now becoming accepted and are proving robust at public enquiries. Winsford Neighbourhood Plan was successfully used by Chester and Cheshire East to contest an appeal against refusal for an edge of town housing estate.

Initially, some planning authorities were reluctant to challenge any recommendations made by the independent examiner, however the report by Dr Mynors had made clear that a planning authority could accept some or all recommendations providing the NP remained in conformity with both national and local policy.

Conformity with Local Plan

One of the criteria is that the Neighbourhood Plan must conform to the broad policies set out in the Central Bedfordshire Council's Local Plan when adopted.

Initial guidance from the Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG) was that conformity needed to be with emerging Local Plan rather than any existing strategic plan, however DCLG now refer to the Independent Examiner Report for Winsford, by D Mynors. This states that the requirement is for compliance with an existing local plan although consideration of an emerging local plan is desirable where possible. This would mean that any Neighbourhood Plan adopted before a new Local Plan would need to conform with the existing Local Development Framework Core Strategy and any retained policies of Central Bedfordshire Council. Although the emerging Local Plan will gradually gain status as it progresses through the due process, it would be sensible for a Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick to be completed after the Local Plan is adopted and to cover the same period.

Community Infrastructure Levy

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows local planning authorities to set charges which developers must pay when bringing forward new development in order to contribute to new infrastructure (Planning Act 2008 & CIL Regulations 2010 as amended), including:

- Transport, such as highway improvements; bus / rail interchange and cycling facilities.
- Local schools; further education facilities and community building.
- Parks; play areas; leisure and cultural centres.
- Community safety; health and social care provision.

The Localism Act introduced changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy. Firstly, it includes provisions to make regulations requiring some of these funds to be passed to local councils or neighbourhoods where the development has taken place. Secondly, it makes clear that funds can be spent on the ongoing costs of infrastructure, as well as the initial costs of new infrastructure. Up to 15% of CIL (capped) is passed to local councils, but this rises to 25% uncapped if a Neighbourhood Plan is in place. To date, more than 200 CIL schemes have been adopted in England. (Planning Resources, December)

The Central Bedfordshire CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule was published for a 6-week consultation period on 14 January 2013. The second stage of consultation, the publication of the Draft Charging Schedule, was carried out in the summer of 2015. They are currently reviewing the schedule following the withdrawal of the Development Strategy in November 2015. There is no agreed timescale for future work at this stage. The draft scheme consulted on proposed CIL at £150/sq. m floorspace on all open market houses built gaining planning permission after the adoption date, £200/sq/m on large retail superstores of 2,500 m² & above and £100/sq. m on other retail uses (A1- A5), with some key town centre exceptions.

Resources

In preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, there are significant commitments in terms of time and energy, over a period of up to 2 years. The Town Council's major expense would be employing consultants, consultation, printing and room hire. From research with other councils, I would expect the costs to the Town Council to be in the region of £20k. Planning authorities are able to claim from the Department of Communities and Local Government, £5k on an area being designated and up to a further £25k on plans being ready for independent review. Planning authorities do incur some direct costs such as the independent assessment, referendum and offering guidance.

A grant of up to £8k is available available directly to the Town Council from the DCLG Supporting Community fund and this may be increased by up to a further £6k where a plan is particularly complex (DCLG Locality Website).

The process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan is long and complex. High quality project management and risk management skills will be required.

Next Steps

If the Council wishes to progress neighbourhood planning, it must formally apply to Central Bedfordshire Council to designate a neighbourhood area and define it on a map. The planning authority must then publicise the application on their website and consider any representations before approving it.

It would then be sensible to establish a Steering Group, to oversee the development of the plan. Whilst legally it is the Town Council's responsibility to approve the neighbourhood plan, which is submitted to the planning authority, it is good practice to involve the wider community as much as possible. It is suggested that a steering group should be of a practical size and have representatives from the Town Council and representatives which represent major interests such as businesses, community groups, property ownership and balance geographical representation. The Department of Communities and Local Government produce a "Roadmap Guide to Neighbourhood Planning" which gives considerable practical advice and on which a project plan can be based.

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/create-neighbourhood-plan-step-by-step-roadmap-guide/>

The Town Council would need to appoint consultants to undertake much of the work and there are now a number of consultants with experience. There would need to be considerable community involvement. It is suggested this should be introduced at the beginning of the process and is ongoing through to consultation stage.

When completed, a draft Neighbourhood Plan would be submitted to the planning authority, which would publicise the fact and appoint an independent person to examine the Plan. This may be a member of the Planning Inspectorate but can also be another competent person. Central Bedfordshire Council would then arrange for a referendum and the Neighbourhood Plan would only be approved if supported by 50% or more of voters.

About the Plan itself

The Town Council would get fairly wide discretion on its format and contents, but it will be a statutory planning document and as such can however only deal with planning matters. It may be desirable to prepare a town Design Guide to consider the detailed design of development and of public realm.

The period of the Neighbourhood Development Plan should be as close to that of the Local Plan as possible, currently 2035. This gives certainty to the community that if a level of development is approved, it will not be increased every 4 or 5 years. Plans can be reviewed but there must be substantial justification for any major changes.

The Planning Advisory Service state that neighbourhood plans are not required to have a sustainability appraisal undertaken on them, although there is still confusion over this. However, impacts still need to be considered as part of good planning.

Recommendations

1. To make a decision in principle to make a Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick Town, to be developed in line with the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and completed as soon as possible after adoption of the Local Plan.

Rob McGregor
Town Clerk

