

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 10 February 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair), Councillors Tony Ansell, Joy Capstick, Brendan Glynane, Phil Larratt, Lee Mason, Suresh Patel, Winston Strachan and Sivaramen Subbarayan

APOLOGIES: Councillors Elizabeth Gowen, Jamie Lane and Matt Lynch

OFFICERS Richard Palmer – Planning Policy Team Leader
Paul Lewin – Planning Policy and Conservation Manager
Tracy Tiff - Scrutiny Officer
Nicola Brindley - Democratic Services Officer

OBSERVER Councillor Tim Hadland

1. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Joy Capstick declared an interest as a member of the WNDC Board.

3. PRE- DECISION SCRUTINY: NENE MEADOWS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Richard Palmer, Planning Policy Team Leader, presented a report and addressed the Committee. He confirmed that the report would be presented to Cabinet on 19th February and that the Supplementary Planning Document followed plan policy in Northampton Central Area Action Plan. It provided further guidance and was more detailed.

There were a number of Master plans for Nene Meadows which was put together and supported the evidence base for the CAAP. The Plan was adopted in January 2013 and the policy referred to the need to undertake additional work. There would be a hyperlink in the Committee report which linked to the SPD and subsequent proposals including the enabling development on council owned land to the west of Becket's Park. The SPD includes guidance to mitigate the impact of future development and to provide for a green frontage to the development.

During the course of drafting the SPD comprehensive engagement had been undertaken with stakeholders prior to public consultation. He outlined the vision and objectives which highlighted issues regarding an accessible destination for leisure and recreation, improved access and connectivity, the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment and University of Northampton campus.

There were seven key principles which were outlined as:-

- 1) Becketts Park – opportunity for built development adjoining Becket's Park. Housing opportunities or two or three storey offices.
- 2) Central Activity hub – One stop shop for visitors to Nene Meadows.

- 3) Improving event space – key location four supporting these events
- 4) Access and Connectivity
- 5) Improvements to the public realm.
- 6) Improvements to conservation, biodiversity and heritage
- 7) Design and sustainability.

The public consultation was extensive and there were stakeholder workshops and also a database of interested parties, residents and the public who were informed of the SPD. The public consultation was held between Oct and November 2013 and they had received 19 responses back which were either in support of the development or they had made comments on.

The next steps in the process were that it would be presented to Cabinet on the 19th February 2014 and if approved would be adopted.

Councillor Brendan Glynane commented that he would like to view the public comments and supported a lot of the principles. He was not in support of the railway embankment being used for housing as it sheltered the rest of the park.

Richard Palmer confirmed that the Area Action Plan set the principle for the enabling development, which the Council had signed up to. The impact was considered although the principle could not be changed. The Wildlife Trust had made very detailed comments which spanned over five or six pages. Officers took into account the comments made. After the press release had been published there were a number of enquiries from the public, who were generally were happy with the plans once the details had been viewed and explained.

In response to a question from Councillor Joy Capstick, Richard Palmer confirmed that the University were not directly within the SPD area but interaction with the University would be dealt with carefully as there was an opportunity to think about connectivity and sensitivity.

Councillor Joy Capstick confirmed that she wanted to view a clear detailed copy of the map and urged for more housing to be built on the land as people still needed homes which were close to the town centre.

Councillor Phil Larratt considered that development on the embankment was unlikely due to the cost of moving it although he did not want to see it removed as it would reveal the supermarket and petrol station behind it. He queried whether the trees on the Avenue were protected by the plan as the council did not put tree preservation orders on their own trees. He also queried the proposed access road to the university which went through the park as it had to be safe for the children and skaters who would use the area. He wanted to see whether there were any playing pitches in the development and questioned the long term maintenance of the area. There had been problems in the past of litter in the skater park area.

Richard Palmer confirmed that the enabling development related to policy in the adopted CAAP. The SPD provided the way forward should a proposal be carried through. Sports pitches were not proposed to be provided through the SPD. Long term maintenance was not a planning issue for the SPD to consider, although this issue could be given further consideration by the Council more generally. He gave examples of the points raised by the 19 organisations and their responses. Officers had had discussions with the County Council Highways Department with regard to the cycle ways and pedestrian paths. The existing access had consent and the proposals had changed from the original proposals.

Paul Lewin, Planning Policy and Heritage Manager, confirmed that they were aware of the litter problems at the skater park and after officers had spoken to Enterprise there had been

an improvement.

In respect of the enabling development. There would be no clear view of the supermarket as the land either would be developed or stay as it was. The trees would be considered as part of the planning application process and the development could be set back to provide a green frontage. The Council was the landowner.

He confirmed that money had been given for Section 106 policy in relation to the football pitches from WNDC and there were guidelines concerning what the money was for and where it could be spent.

Councillor Phil Larratt requested that an investigation be made as to where the S106 money was as it was time limited and if it could be used for football pitches in the area. The trees at the front should be protected and adequate pedestrian facilities included. Sports pitches should be considered and a comprehensive maintenance plan put in place.

It was agreed that there was limited information and insufficient plans available for this development.

The Cabinet member and Director would be requested to report to the Committee at the next meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee formally notifies Cabinet that it supports the Nene Meadows Supplementary Planning Document and recommends that:
- (2) It is ensured that the trees located near to the embankment on the site are protected from any future enabling development proposal.
- (3) It is ensured that provision is made for adequate, safe crossing areas for pedestrians and safe cycle facilities on the access road to the University.
- (4) The introduction of sports facilities to the site is considered.
- (5) A proper and comprehensive maintenance regime is implemented for the site

The meeting concluded at 19.15