

HORTON & WRAYSBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Steering Group meeting: Monday, February 1, 2016

Special Workshop with our Consultant, the Environment Agency and RBWM

Held at Wraysbury Village Hall, 3.30pm

SG Members present: Margaret Lenton (chairman), Peter Lord, Betty Marlow, Eileen Coogan, Julie Gomme, Diana Hughes, Lynn Holden, Fred Parsons. Consultant: John Slater

Also present: Scott Salmon and Jonathan Fleming (EA), Robert Paddison (RBWM), Ollie Francis and Graham Sinclair (flood wardens), David Young (resident and Thames Awash member).

1. Introductions : ML welcomed everybody to the meeting and introductions were made. JS then outlined what stage the NPlan had reached and set out the aims for this meeting, following the Agenda he had already sent round.

He underlined that land use planning is the key part of the NP, but community concerns on other matters can be addressed through projects within the NP.

With Horton and Wraysbury being 90% in the Green Belt and over half being within a flood plain, there were significant constraints on development. We need to test how much flexibility there may be in the Green Belt and how to work best with the flood zone restrictions.

Having analysed the Questionnaire survey as what's important to the villages, we have to focus on the issues and to discuss what policies we are promoting. We aim to hold some open day events to find out what everyone thinks about these prior to preparing a Pre-Submission Plan to go out to the community.

2. Questions to RBWM : JS had requested a list of information from the borough planners.

On progress of the new Borough Local Plan, which is currently being prepared, RP said that it was hopeful that the consultation of the BLP would be held in the spring, possibly April. The horizon of the BLP is expected to be around 2030-32. It would be sensible for the NP to share the same time period.

On the matters of housing allocations, Green Belt releases, exception sites, RP felt he was unable to offer any guidance of these at this time. He did not identify any housing allocations in the Plan area or significant Green Belt releases.

Asked what are the strategic policies of the adopted development plan that the NP have to be consistent with - RP thought these would be signed off around the end of February.

With the lack of solid information, JS felt the statutory test would be comply with the adopted Local Plan 2003, and proposed that we push ahead with the NP as there is no reason why we cannot refresh it further down the line rather than wait for the adoption of the new Local Plan, which would have more stages and be more complex than the NP.

Regarding any need for an SEA, that is for the RBWM to determine, but it was thought it may not be automatically needed despite the existence of European designated sites with the Plan area.

In terms of aircraft noise and air quality, RP indicated that he would check with the Environmental Health Dept.

On other questions on the agenda list, RP said he would investigate further.

DY asked could we promote sites rather than just deal with allocations?

After discussion it was said that there was no reason why the NP could not propose sites.

RBWM would be carrying out a range of consultations and there is no reason why the parish councils and individuals could not promote sites for development perhaps by changing the boundaries of the Green Belt through consultation responses to that plan.

3. Questions to the EA : Asked whether the flood map on the NP website gives best information , and on areas of floodplain being less vulnerable than others - the EA said that there are more detailed maps showing areas which are in Flood Zone 3A (areas subject to 1% risk of flooding) and 3B (the functional floodplain), which need to be applied for. *PL to enquire about these.*

Also EA said that regarding any developments, it's best to approach the team first to get assessments. There may be negotiations possible on mitigations.

Re: Flood zone 3 exceptions test – need detailed flood modelling.

In answer to the question as to how the EA would look at the Sequential Test in terms of meeting locally generated need – would the constraints mean that locally met need had to be satisfied outside of the plan area. - It was explained that to meet the Sequential Test, the plan would need to demonstrate that there were no sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area that were available outside the flood plain that could be developed before sites in the flood plain could be identified.

SS said that the EA is in discussions with RBWM over flood risk, seeking a bespoke policy to ensure risk is not increased but benefits can be gained.

On permitted development extensions, the EA said that any increasing building into a flood plain needs to build as such to compensate for the loss of water storage. There must be offset arrangements, but this was outside the planning regime.

Asked about escape routes and acceptable depth of flooding - EA said they have to be guided by the evidence as to whether acceptable routes were available to areas outside the flood area, where the depth of water was shallow enough to allow emergency vehicles. This would have to be demonstrated by the Plan if it was to promote the development of island, ie Flood Zone 1, if surrounded by areas that had flooded.

FP said that one of the main aspirations of the community is for more availability of smaller properties in or near the centre of the village for downsizers or young buyers wishing to stay in the village.

Yet there were frustrations in that aim recently when a proposal for four flats on a rebuild site (flood zone 1) on the Staines Road was turned down, by reason of the risk associated with the escape route listed on the map as being in flood zone 3. But the road (B376) was dry in the big flood of 2014, being higher than the adjacent land.

FP felt there was an inconsistency in that now a 5-bedroom house has been given the go-ahead with no such flood risk attached. – The feeling of the SG is that with historic evidence the Staines Road should be recognised by the EA as a dedicated escape route. JF indicated that there were specific reasons for this recommendation which he was prepared to discuss outside of the meeting.

River Thames Scheme

SS outlined the proposed River Thames Scheme aimed at alleviating flood risk to our area. It is a 10-year scheme which consists of a new flood channel, improvements to 3 of the existing Thames weirs, installation of property level products for up to 1,200 homes (to make them more resilient to floods) and improved flood incident response plans.

It will rely on Government funding and the EA will be working with seven local council partners and other bodies.

The weir work, aimed at increasing flow capacity, is aimed to start in 2018. The flood channel, which would run from Datchet to Shepperton and built in three sections. From lower Datchet it would run under Welley Road at Sunnymeads, through parts of the Wraysbury Lakes and come out at Runnymede. The channel work is hoped to begin in 2020 and take around five years.

Around the channel a green corridor will be created which will be of benefit to the community, with footpaths etc.

All communities between Datchet and Teddington will benefit from the scheme. This includes the communities downstream of the flood channel, as modifications to the weir will also reduce water levels between Walton Bridge and Teddington.

The alleviation scheme is aimed to be a defended floodplain – as a protection for current built properties. It would not mean the go ahead for further development in the floodplain.

Importantly, it was to allow a relaxation of planning policies following the implementations as there would still be vulnerability if the severity of the flood event exceeded the design event.

The EA were considering whether the scheme would be dealt with in the national infrastructure regime or whether it would be covered by normal planning consents. This has implications as to whether the NP can include policies relating to the Scheme, including safeguarding the route from new development.

SG

Further discussions were then held within the SG with regard to the way forward.
