

MINUTES

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Woodham Walter Parish Council.
Held at 7.00pm using Virtual technology hosted by Zoom.

Monday 12th April 2021

Present:

Cllr. James Rushton (Chairman)
Cllr. John Brown
Cllr. James Bunn
Cllr. Jenny Hughes
Cllr. Joanna Symons
Cllr. John Tompkins
Cllr. Peter Warren

Others: Jacky Bannerman (Parish Clerk)
 District Councillor Mark Durham
 District Councillor Karl Jarvis
 County Councillor Penny Channer

Public: 4

2477. Welcome Cllr. Rushton welcomed those present. The Chairman began the meeting by remembering the life of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh and gave thanks for the service he gave to Queen and Country. There followed a minute's silence.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for updating the website home page in memory of the Duke as well as issuing a Village Email. It was noted that floral arrangements and physical books of condolence are not being encouraged due to the COVID restrictions. If any residents require help with completing on-line tributes, the Chairman has volunteered to help. The Chairman also thanked Paul Clark from St Michael's Church for ringing the Bell on Saturday.

2478. Apologies For Absence None

2479. Disclosure of Interests/Consideration of Dispensations To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, other Pecuniary Interests or Non-Pecuniary Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraphs 6-10 inclusive of the Code of Conduct for Members. (Members are reminded they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

As previously reported re: Warren Golf Club, Cllr. James Rushton has declared a non-pecuniary interest as his wife is a member at Warren Active and Cllr. Joanna Symons has declared non-pecuniary interest in the Warren Golf Club as she is a member at Warren Active.

There were no other interests declared.

2480. Public Forum There were 4 members of the public present who were in attendance to raise the following points:

Member of the Public 1

- Reported that construction activity continues, and new wooden gates have been erected at Grove Manor. Asked that these matters are drawn to the attention of relevant parties.

Member of the Public 2

- In attendance to listen to proceedings and updated councillors that debris had been cleared from the ditch along Blue Mill Lane.

Members of the Public 3/4

- Interested to learn an update with regards to the Enforcement enquiries at The Warren Estate Lodges.

2481. To approve the minutes of Virtual Ordinary Parish Council meeting held on Monday 8th March 2021. Cllr. John Tompkins proposed and Cllr. James Bunn seconded that the minutes are adopted as a true record of the meeting, agreed by all.

2482. Matters Arising It was noted that Matters arising are contained within the Agenda. There are no other matters arising.

2483. Enforcement

An update following the last meeting at which Damien Ghela and the Leader, Cllr. Stamp were in attendance. We have received a written response from Michael Johnson (Head of Enforcement Team) from MDC covering some of the points raised about specific cases which had been investigated. It is felt that there is a will from the council to provide answers, but we are still waiting for full responses to our detailed questions.

Mr Johnson had offered to attend this meeting however, it was decided that a written response to all of the questions raised, in advance would result in the best use of his time. We can then ask him to elaborate and he has been invited to attend the next meeting.

It was noted that concerns have been raised by local residents about the adherence to planning conditions at The Warren Lodges. The Parish Council are in a process of seeking clarification and are treating it as a priority to seek answers to our questions.

It is concerning to note that in Mr Johnson's initial response he provides information that Enforcement have a caseload of over 600 and only 2 officers dealing with this. The question as to what is being done to address this was put to elected Maldon District Council Members.

Cllr. Jarvis informed that the staffing is being looked at along with the processes. Some cases within the caseload just require reviewing and signing off by suitably qualified officer. During the COVID period a build-up has occurred which the Leader has in mind to address. Enforcement is very much on the agenda at MDC. Cllr. Jarvis confirmed that Mr Johnson is the right officer to deal with the questions raised. He confirmed that he does chase enforcement cases up but that often details are confidential and cannot be shared.

Cllr. Durham noted that the Enforcement Team has not been properly resourced or organised for a number of years and this has been an on-going frustration for District Councillors. Cases have now been classified in terms of their importance, therefore those that are marked not urgent are probably not being looked at all.

Cllr. Channer reported that she had been given assurances that through the budget process there was a figure of £72,000 for the Enforcement Team and that a new Policy was adopted by the Council which is designed to make the team more efficient. This matter should be drawn to the attention of the Council in our correspondence. Cllr. Channer also suggested that District Councillors can ask their committee chairman to call a special meeting for Enforcement updates.

The Parish Council wants to understand that Enforcement is being carried out and how it is carried out to give confidence going forward because what we see currently is omissions from the past.

Cllr. Rushton gave a brief report about the details of the historic enforcement cases at The Warren Lodges and that many of these have been closed as no breaches were found. There is still one case on-going. Regarding the period of immunity from planning enforcement action, it is confirmed that a breach would need to be in place of 10 years as the alleged breach is of planning conditions.

The Chairman allowed the meeting to be opened to Members of the Public 3 & 4.

- They commented that the lodges should not be occupied currently because of the COVID restrictions. *(It was pointed out that the Government changed the rules and that if any person could not return to their permanent residence that they should stay in the holiday accommodation.)*
- Enforcement concerns have been on-going for years. There is no confidence that enforcement is effective. This is action that locals want. The Parish Council have indicated that they have been pushing enforcement concerns with very little satisfactory conclusion. We are not satisfied.
- The Warren and Maldon District Council do not appear to be making proper checks. We are asking for broad information on checking processes and there should be paperwork in place to prove this.

Cllr. Rushton thanked the members of the public for raising these concerns and is grateful for their continuing to hold us to account. The Parish Council is very concerned to resolve this with as much speed and clarity as possible.

2484. Planning – APPLICATIONS

2484.1 21/00272/WTPO The Shrubby, Curling Tye Lane

T2 – Reduce exposed limb on north side of crown by 4m, selectively reduce canopy by 3m. T3 – Reduce canopy by 3m and reshape. T4, T11 & T21 – Remove deadwood. T6, T7, T10, T15, T16, T17 & T19- Remove deadwood. Crown lift canopy over road to 4.5m. T2 – Reduce lower side branch by 3m. T9 – Reduce to leave 5m pollard stem, remove western branch over road. T2 – Reduce low leaning main stem back to main union. T13, T14, T22, T23, T24, G25, T26 & T28 – Clear weedy competition around base and mulching under canopy. T18 – Reduce end weight of declining canopy by 3m, remove deadwood, crown lift to 4.5m. T20 – Fell and grind.

Councillors support the application.

2484.2 21/00257/HOUSE Spring Elms Farm, Spring Elms Lane

Rear pitched roof single storey extension, relocating existing bay window with additional side windows and French doors, all to match existing materials.

Councillors support the application.

2484.3 21/00362/FUL Bell Meadow, Church Hill

Application submitted. Development of land on Bell Meadow to reinstate public children's playground facility.

The application has been submitted by the Parish Council. There are statutory laws which dictate the speed at which the application can be determined and it will take several weeks, however, the Council are mindful of the situation and will expediate as quickly as possible. Although the Parish Council has an extant permission already and the changes are fairly minor, even so the Parish Council wouldn't want to commence works without proper permissions in place.

2484.4 21/00350/LDP Woodham Walter Primary School

Claim for Lawful Development Certificate for the proposed stationing of a double decker bus within the school grounds for incidental teaching purposes.

The application had been received after the agenda had been set. It was agreed that the Clerk will respond using delegated powers in order to meet the deadline. It was noted that the response will not be able to consider the planning merits of the development, but solely whether the proposal complies with the planning legislation and requires planning permission or not.

2485. Planning – DECISIONS

2485.1 NMA/MAL/21/00135 Bell Meadow, Church Hill

REFUSE

Application for non-material amendment following grant of Planning Permission 19/00187/FUL (Development of land on Bell Meadow to reinstate public playground facility). Amendment sought: Wicksteed playground furniture replaced with revised playground furniture by Caloo.

The application was refused due to a technicality. Representations were made to MDC as they had advised that the NMA was the application that should have been made. A new full application has now been submitted and MDC have indicated that under the circumstances it will be expediated as quickly as possible and apologised for the confusion caused by the original recommendation. There is no further charge for this application.

2485.2 21/00083/LDE Grove Manor, Herbage Park Road

WITHDRAWN

Claim for lawful development certificate for existing extension to outbuilding.

2486. Other Planning Matters

2486.1 Enforcement – To advise on any updates.

- i. General Enquiries following previous meeting – see min ref: 2483
- ii. Warren Estate – await updates – see min ref: 2483.
- iii. Oak Farm – enforcement case opened regarding works at brick barns/stables. Await update.
- iv. Grove Manor – enforcement case opened regarding various works. Councillors asked Clerk to write again and detail further concerns and ask that the case is prioritised. Councillor Durham confirmed he has already taken on this case and will also pursue with the Enforcement team and request an urgent site visit.
- v. Double Decker Bus – MDC have confirmed that it is considered there is a breach of planning control that should be remedied. The Council has invited the submission of an application for a retrospective planning permission. If an application is not submitted or if the application is refused, the council will consider the expediency of further action. It was noted that an application for a Lawful Development Certificate has now been submitted (min. ref: 2484.4).

2486.2 Model Design Code – Cllr. Tompkins reported that the intent of the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission' is to tackle the challenge of poor-quality design and build of homes and places across the country and help ensure that building for the future is with popular consent. The Commission gathered evidence from both the public and private sectors to develop practical policy solutions to ensure the design and style of new developments, including new settlements and the country's high streets, help to grow a sense of community and place, not undermine it.

Cllr. Tompkins will share his full report (Appendix 1: with these minutes) with Councillors and recommends that given the above report, combined with experience of other recent planning issues, there is merit in considering reconvening or forming a new VDS Committee. The remit would be to integrate recent planning application experience and emerging legislation into the VDS enabling it to be maintained as current, become more of a design handbook and become more useful in the pallet of tools available to the Council and the LPA when dealing with planning applications.

Clerk will share the report with Councillors and include as an agenda item at the next meeting to consider the recommendation.

2486.3 The Minerals Local Plan 2014 (Draft Proposed Amendments) Public Consultation – Cllr. Brown reported that there is nothing within the report relevant to Woodham Walter. No action required. It was noted that this is a forward-looking plan and the reason none of the pits around us (e.g. Royal Oak/St Clere's) are included in the report (despite test pits being dug between Thrift Wood and Herbage Park Road) is because these are existent sites and not part of the future plan.

Cllr. Warren reported from previous meetings attended, that the field adjacent to Thrift Wood is an extant site and is expected to be scheduled for development in the mid 2020's with access via the Royal Oak site and not onto Herbage Park Road.

2487. Reports Of the County/District Councillor's

It is noted that Cllr. Channer has submitted various documents and updates which are shared with Councillors and via village emails as appropriate. This has included updates on COVID, Highways etc. Cllr. Channer reported that ECC are encouraging residents to please shop local as a lot of effort has been made with local businesses to welcome customers back. Park and Ride at Sandon has now reopened, and Chelmer Valley is due to return to service from 17 May. Covid infection rates in the Maldon District continue to go in the right direction but strict adherence to guidelines is still essential. Self-testing kits are now available. Libraries have now reopened.

Cllr. Jarvis updated that MDC agreed to longer ongoing support for the Leisure Centres. There is a current Call For Sites for the revised LDP which is an interim revision scheduled to be completed for 2023. There will be an opportunity for Parish Council's to have an input. It is hoped that the Legislation regarding virtual meetings will be resolved at the High Court Case on 21st April.

2488. Financial Matters

2488.1 Summary of Accounts to date

DATE	ACCOUNT / TRANSACTION DETAIL	AMOUNT IN	AMOUNT OUT	BALANCE
------	------------------------------	--------------	---------------	---------

Business Reserve A/C

01-Apr-21	Opening Balance			45887.34
12-Apr-21	Transferred to Community Account		1200.00	44687.34

Community Account

01-Apr-21	Opening Balance			1301.60
12-Apr-21	Transfer from Business Reserve	1200.00		2501.60
12-Apr-21	April Debits		1952.46	549.14

2488.2 Review of Bank Statements and Account sheets. Councillor Brown confirmed that he has reviewed the Bank and Credit Card Statements and Account sheets for March and found them to be reconciled correctly.

2488.3 End of Financial Year – works are being completed for the Audit. It was noted that a draft statement of account had been issued. The reserves are currently higher than usual because the funding is in place for the Playground. The Chairman will review the financial records prior to submitting to the Internal Auditor. The clerk will complete the AGAR paperwork.

2489. Payments The following payments as listed in the payment schedule were approved.

Ref:	Payee	Method	Gross	VAT	Net
2489.1	Skippers Ground Maintenance (Highway Gritting) (Paid 22/03/21)	BACS	240.00	40.00	200.00
Ref:	Payee	Method	Gross	VAT	Net
2489.2	E-on	DD	31.73	1.51	30.22
2489.3	A&J Lighting Solutions	DD	25.20	4.20	21.00
2489.4	Mrs J Bannerman (Salary & Allowance)	BACS	1093.43	0.00	1093.43
2489.5	Barclaycard (Zoom, Amazon, Corido (Bench) MSFT365)	DD	221.66	31.21	190.45
2489.7	LJ Print (Annual Parish Report)	BACS	272.02	0.00	272.02
2489.8	EALC/NALC Affiliation Fees	BACS	189.62	0.00	189.62
2489.6	Iris Business Software Ltd (Payroll)	BACS	118.80	19.80	99.00

2489.7 It was also noted that annual payments for TSO Hosting and Ring Central Telephone were due to be paid on the Barclaycard in the coming month.

2490. Other Council Matters

2490.1 Clerks Update.

- i. Regular village emails continue to be sent by the Clerk with relevant updates for residents. Information is also put on the website on a regular basis. These emails will continue. There are now 160 on the village email list.
- ii. Road map information from Government.

2490.2 Community Engagement Team (CET) – March report awaited.

2490.3 Woodham Walter Common – more reports of vehicles entering the woods, however it has been confirmed that this is due to timber extraction and the deep ruts will be repaired.

2490.4 Dates of Meetings – the Government has announced that it will not be extending legislation which allows virtual meetings. There is a High Court Case on 21st April which will determine whether we may be able to continue meeting virtually. As it stands the Parish Council will not be allowed to meet virtually after 7th May. The Women's Club will be very difficult to use in a COVID secure way as

social distancing will not be possible. The Village Hall is not available on Monday's. Tuesday's are available and we could consider meeting there with relevant Covid secure measures taken including additional cleaning, social distancing, track and trace and pre-booking for members of the public so that we can insure that numbers remain within acceptable levels.

It was agreed that the May meeting will be brought forward to Tuesday 4th May at 7pm. This will include the AGM and will be held virtually. It was agreed to wait until after the High Court Decision and then decide the best way for the Parish Council to continue to meet.

2490.5 Annual Parish Meeting & Report – the report has been delivered to properties in Woodham Walter by Parish Councillors/Clerk.

2490.6 Party Tents – Booking enquiry has been postponed although a further two enquiries have been made. Storage considerations on-going.

2490.7 Safeguarding Policy – As a result of applying to the Essex Community Foundation for a grant for the new Playground landscaping works, it was noted that we currently do not have a Safeguarding Policy and that this is a requirement of receiving any funds from them. Having looked into this, it would appear to be a policy that the parish Council should have in place – particularly as we are about to develop a Playground facility. Cllr. Tompkins proposed and Cllr. Jenny Hughes seconded that the policy be adopted, all in agreement. To adhere to the training stipulation, the Clerk has booked onto an EALC Safeguarding course on 18th May. Councillors agreed that Clerk should have a DBS certificate. This policy and certificate would also be appropriate for working with DofE volunteers.

2491. Highways & Infrastructure

2491.1 Faded 30mph sign on The Street - Await update.

2491.2 Slippery road surface at West Bowers Road. The works have now been completed. Cllr. Hughes reported that there remain concerns that the problem will recur, and she will monitor.

2491.3 Curling Tye/Blue Mill Flooding – on-going. Debris from the ditch has been removed.

2491.4 Little Baddow Road crack – on-going.

2491.5 Common Lane – Street sign missing. Reported to MDC. Await replacement.

2491.6 Village Hedges – Herbage Park Road and Rectory Road. Reported but does not meet the requirements. Cllr. Channer has chased up and the Highways Rangers have been tasked to complete the works for Rectory Road.

2491.7 Double Yellow Lines – leaf mulch at Hoe Mill has been cleared.

2491.8 Holly Tree on boundary of Rectory Road/Mead Pastures junction. Clerk will make enquiries.

2491.9 It was reported that various items from the County Councillor pothole and footway list have been completed including Top Road, Old London Road/Herbage park Road junction and manhole on Church Hill.

2492. Local Issues

2492.1 Bell Meadow a) Football Goals – ongoing. Cllr. Bunn has fixed the post and awaits a visit by the welder who will carry out works including fixing the back bars. Some padlocks and further ground anchors will also be purchased. b) Water Trees, Councillors are reminded to water the trees. It does look like one of the trees has died and will need replacing in the Autumn. The gap in the hedge where plants are due to be replanted has started to get used as a cut through. It was agreed to put some posts and wire to prevent access. Cllr. Durham agreed to carry out this work. c) DofE Volunteer – no applications to date. d) Rotten gate catch post – Skippers are due to replace. e) Trees/Hedges due to be delivered at end of April. Clerk to arrange planting. These will then need regular watering. Cllr. Jarvis also offered some hawthorn plants if required. f) Councillors are reminded to update excel document and report any issues to the Parish Clerk.

2492.2 Footpaths Report. Cllr Warren reported that a large tree blocked FP37 at White House Farm but was cleared quickly. Essex Wildlife Trust have been doing bridge repairs within the Common. Two footbridges were irreparable and have been removed. Cllr. Warren has notified the PROW Officer but there is still the Bridleway Bridge (BR10) which seems sufficient. The stile on FP3 at Bassetts Lane/ Crossways has been reported as it is dangerous. The definitive map indicates that this should be a gate.

2492.3 School Report. Cllr. Symons reported that she had attended a Governors meeting at the end of March when there were 109 children on the school role with 14 due to join in September. The children have settled back into school routines. Staff and pupils have coped admirably with the extraordinary year.

2492.4 Litter – Fly Tip along pumping station track was reported to Essex & Suffolk Water and they cleared.

2492.5 Dog Bin Requests – enquiry made with MDC on-going. It was also noted that a village resident has suggested a litter bin at the top end of the village. Councillors agree that this is a sensible idea and Clerk will make enquiries.

2492.6 New Playground Report. Non-Material Amendment application was refused and new Full Application has been submitted. Application has been submitted to Essex Community Foundation for funding for the landscaping works.

2492.7 Memorial Garden Signage – on going. Chairman will investigate options.

2492.8 Crime Reports. It was noted that there had been a garage break-in along Little London Lane.

2492.9 Hoe Mill/Canal - Clerk had corresponded with the Essex Waterways who are keen to develop relationship with the Parish Council and they accept that there are some issues. Roy Chandler had submitted a report for the Annual Report. They would welcome setting up a working party for a litter pick. The suggestion of litter bins is being investigated, clerk has asked MDC to consider. Clerk had also been contacted by Cllr. Lester Magness from Langford & Ulting Parish Council who would also like to engage with matters concerning the canal. Ulting residents have great issues with regards to parking concerns. Clerk will liaise with Cllr. Rushton. Cllr. Jarvis also noted that if he can assist with working together he would be happy to.

2492.10 Broadband – Cllr Brown reported that County Broadband have responded and offered a virtual meeting to discuss their plans which include utilising some existing poles as well as installing 9 additional poles. Cllr. Brown will follow this up. Cllr. Durham suggested making contact with Langford & Ulting Parish Council to discuss some of the issues that they have incurred.

2493. Correspondence – Various items in the dropbox.

2494. Points of Information

2494.1 Cllr. Durham asked if anything had been done about the stolen Post Box. Clerk had reported it to Royal Mail who informed that a case had been opened. Clerk will follow up and ask that the post is removed.

2495. Date of Next Parish Council Meeting:

Annual Parish Meeting is Monday 19th April 2021 at 7pm. Next scheduled date of Ordinary Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 4th May 2021. These will be held virtually by Zoom. Parish Clerk to monitor developments and guidelines as they are issued.

Signed

Meeting ended at 9.25pm

Dated

Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

The intent of the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission' is to tackle the challenge of poor-quality design and build of homes and places across the country and help ensure that building for the future is with popular consent. The Commission gathered evidence from both the public and private sectors to develop practical policy solutions to ensure the design and style of new developments, including new settlements and the country's high streets, help to grow a sense of community and place, not undermine it.

The report runs to 190 pages and takes issue with several aspects of the NPPF. It highlights the shortfall in the current planning system, on planning education and design and other prime elements such as enforcement. Not all of it will apply to rural areas but it is nevertheless, in my opinion, a step forward. It focusses on 3 main aims relative to planning:

Ask for Beauty. Beauty includes everything that promotes a healthy and happy life, everything that makes a collection of buildings into a place, everything that turns anywhere into somewhere, and nowhere into home. It is not merely a visual characteristic but is revealed in the deep harmony between a place and those who settle there. So understood, beauty should be an essential condition for planning permission.

Refuse Ugliness. Ugly buildings present a social cost that everyone is forced to bear. They destroy the sense of place, undermine the spirit of community, and ensure that we are not at home in our world. Ugliness means buildings that are unadaptable, unhealthy and unsightly and which violate the context in which they are placed. Preventing ugliness should be a primary purpose of the planning system.

Promote Stewardship. Our built environment and our natural environment belong together. Both should be protected and enhanced for the long-term benefit of the communities that depend on them. Settlements should be renewed, regenerated and cared for, and we should end the scandal of abandoned places, where derelict buildings and vandalised public spaces drive people away. New developments should enhance the environment in which they occur, adding to the health, sustainability and biodiversity of their context.

Those three aims should be embedded in the planning system and in the culture of development, in such a way as to incentivise beauty and deter ugliness in every point where the choice arises.

To achieve this the report recommends proposals in the following 8 areas:

1. **Planning:** create a predictable level playing field.
2. **Communities:** bring the democracy forward.
3. **Stewardship:** incentivise responsibility to the future.
4. **Regeneration:** end the scandal of left behind place.
5. **Neighbourhoods:** create places not just houses.
6. **Nature:** re-green our towns and cities.
7. **Education:** promote a wider understanding of placemaking.
8. **Management:** value planning, count happiness, procure properly.]

Policy Proposition 18: support the right development in the right place.

Policy Proposition 19: end the disincentive to public sector involvement in stewardship schemes.

4. Regeneration: end the scandal of left behind place.

Policy Proposition 20: appoint a Minister for Place.

Policy Proposition 21: appoint a Chief Place-maker in all local authorities.

Policy Proposition 22: regenerate 'regeneration' to being place-led.

Policy Proposition 23: align tax for existing and new places.

Policy Proposition 24: encourage the recycling of buildings.

Policy Proposition 25: encourage resilient high streets.

Policy Proposition 26: banish 'boxland'.

5. Neighbourhoods: create places not just houses.

Policy Proposition 27: end the unintended bias against 'gentle density' neighbourhoods.

Policy Proposition 28: create healthy streets for people.

Policy proposition 29: clean urban air.

6. Nature: re-green our towns and cities.

Policy Proposition 30: ask for more access to greenery.

Policy Proposition 31: plant two million new street trees.

Policy Proposition 32: plant urban orchards - one fruit tree per house.

Policy Proposition 33: regreen streets and squares.

7. Education: promote a wider understanding of placemaking.

Policy Proposition 34: promote planning excellence.

Policy Proposition 35: promote a common understanding of place.

Policy Proposition 36: support design review but not from 'on high'.

'It is vitally important that the development of places is built on a foundation of understanding what is already there. It only by understanding a place that you are able to shape it in ways that respects and enhances local character and distinctiveness.'

The report recommends some 44 policies to supplement these headings:

1. Planning: create a predictable level playing field.

Policy Proposition 1: ask for beauty.

Policy proposition 2: expect net gain not just 'no net harm.'

Policy Proposition 3: say no to ugliness.

Policy Proposition 4: discover beauty locally.

Policy Proposition 5: masterplan, don't plan by appeal.

Policy Proposition 6: use provably popular form-based codes.

Policy Proposition 7: localise the National Model Design Code.

Policy Proposition 8: require permitted development rights to have standards.

Policy Proposition 9: permit a fast track for beauty.

Policy Proposition 10: ensure enforcement.

2. Communities: bring the democracy forward.

Policy Proposition 11: ensure public engagement, is wide, deep and early.

Policy Proposition 12: move public engagement from analogue to digital.

Policy Proposition 13: empower communities.

Policy proposition 14: permit intensification with consent.

Policy proposal 15: create a recognised 'stewardship kitemark'.

3. Stewardship: incentivise responsibility to the future.

Policy proposal 16: provide access to a patient capital fund for schemes meeting the 'stewardship kitemark'.

Policy proposal 17: create a level tax playing field between long-term and short-term approaches to development.

8. Management: value planning, count happiness, procure properly.

Policy proposition 37: streamline planning and shift resources from development control to strategic planning partially, through revolutionising the use of digital technology.

Policy proposition 38: limit the physical length of planning applications.

Policy proposition 39: support centres of excellence.

Policy proposition 40: count happiness and popularity.

Policy proposition 41: value design as well as price.

Policy proposition 42: review Homes England's remit, targets and investment timeframes.

Policy proposition 43: encourage Homes England to take a clearer master developer role and consider establishing a code zone ('permission in form') approach to large sites.

Policy proposition 44: re-discover civic pride in architecture.

It will not have gone unnoticed that there are similarities between what is proposed above and this Council's response to the recent Warren and PIP applications and is a good foundation for assessing future submissions. It is also noted that the NALC, RTPI and RIBA responses to the consultation are broadly accommodating.

Each policy proposition or proposal is explained at length in the Commission Report. It will clearly take some time to achieve legislation in all of those areas but, in my opinion, there is merit in the Report findings. There is also every reason to widen the scope our own design manual, the VDS, to keep it up to date and possibly re-aligned to incorporate more of the proposals.

Recommendation:

Given the above, combined with experience of other recent planning issues, there is merit in considering reconvening or forming a new VDS Committee. The remit would be to integrate recent planning application experience and emerging legislation into the VDS enabling it to be maintained as current, become more of a design handbook and become more useful in the pallet of tools available to the Council and the LPA when dealing with planning applications.

A copy of the report can be downloaded but be warned, it runs to 5.9 MB of space.

JMT/NNWPC/Apr 21