

**Minutes** of the twenty-third meeting of the Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held on 7 January 2015 at the Wivenhoe Council Offices, at 19.30.

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**Present:** Cllrs Robert Needham (chair), Neil Lodge

**Residents:** Peter Hill, Marika Footring (minutes), Jane Black (Wiv. Soc.), Ruth Melville, Mark Norrington, Richard Polom, Joan Sawyer,

**CBC** Christopher Downes, Beverley McLean.

**Apologies for absence:** Graeme Willis, David Allen, Marcus Christensen, Auriol Ashworth.

This meeting focused on Site Allocation Criteria.

By way of introduction, Peter Hill began by mentioning the draft CBC Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation which will have implications for Wivenhoe.

The document suggests “proportional growth” in Wivenhoe and the Land Use and Residential Development WG has calculated this to mean an estimated demand for 450 new houses to be built in the Wivenhoe settlement area- although the document does not mention numbers.

For this purpose the *settlement area* excludes the area north of the A133 which, although included in the Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan Area, will be treated separately between CBC and TDC together and consequently would not take any of this “proportional growth”. (The meeting was advised that 'proportional growth' is intended to be a loose term because the document is consulting on the high-end borough-scale growth strategy.)

The LURD WG had been meeting once a week from July 2014 and from its accumulated knowledge estimates that approximately 230 new houses could be accommodated in the Wivenhoe settlement area although not unless building could be considered on currently Proposed Open Spaces and Coastal Protection Belt land, as otherwise the only area which could be built on without a change of zoning would be up Elmstead Road which might be suitable for 20 – 30 dwellings. If the NP comes up with a reduced number it has to be justified to CBC.

The questions for the NP are: how many houses does Wivenhoe need, of what type, and what sites are available?

Aside from a number of existing policy constraints, the surveys of Wivenhoe residents clearly indicate a desire to retain the green belt separation between Wivenhoe and neighbouring settlements, retention of open spaces and safeguarding of the river aspects and amenities. These preferences, along with resistance to the idea of development of large estates, or any that would result in further burdening the already inadequate road infrastructure, form the background against which eight Site Allocation Criteria (SAC) were drawn up by the LURD WG and presented to the meeting for discussion.

SAC1: Wivenhoe’s identity as a separate town/village must be preserved with a clear green break between the University (on both sides of Colchester Road) and the Wivenhoe settlement area, and with a clear break between Wivenhoe and Alresford (This is supported by views expressed in the survey; relevant Borough policy is CS ENV1)

SAC 1 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 2: There should be a presumption against development on land zoned as coastal protection belt (This is supported by voting preferences about sites in the survey and views expressed about the value placed on the river and riverside walks. The relevant Borough policies are DP 23, CS ENV1)

The CPB was based on a Structural Plan which no longer exists. A new CPB can be drawn by the WNP, affording some flexibility in eventual site allocation.

SAC 2 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 3: No land of high landscape value should be developed and the vistas from and towards Wivenhoe should be protected (No specific survey question was asked about this. CS ENV1 is relevant)

SAC 3 was in principle agreed by the meeting although it was felt that to some extent SACs 2 & 3 run together.

SAC 4: Land that is environmentally important for nature conservation should not be used (Indirect evidence in survey from comments in the countryside section. Borough policies DP21, DP20, CS ENV1)

SAC 4 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 5: New housing must be spread across several locations. Small developments will be preferred to larger ones. (Opinion expressed in survey)

SAC 5 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 6: Sites and types of development which will not lead to a significant increase in peak hour traffic on busy roads such as Rectory Road and the Avenue are to be preferred (Opinion expressed in survey and Borough CS TA1 is relevant)

SAC 6 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 7 Development should be sited to allow easy pedestrian and cycle access to the rest of Wivenhoe settlement area and should be within 0.5 miles of a bus stop. (Transport WG recommendation and supported by Borough CS TA1, TA2)

After an amendment that deletes the 0.5 mile distance stipulation (so as to conform to National Guidance of 400 m) SAC 7 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

SAC 8: Benefits from rival uses for a site, such as playing fields, open space, cemetery and allotments, must be assessed when judging suitability for housing use. (There was support in survey for more open space, a cemetery etc. Borough policies DP15 CS PR1 are relevant)

After an amendment that deletes the specifics *such as playing fields, open space, cemetery and allotments*, SAC 8 was in principle agreed by the meeting.

A possible additional criterion that had not been included in the SACs was: *that the impact of development on neighbouring properties should be kept as low as possible.*

This is already in the CBC planning policy and was not thought necessary for the WNP.

Another LURD WG suggestion was that the SG should consider *whether some sites are more suitable for one type of housing rather than another.* It was accepted that this is work that needs to be undertaken in due course.

The proposal regarding the blanket restriction on development of sub-divided gardens was discussed and left for final decision until the survey data had been looked at once more as the SG is aware of a number of objections to the proposal as it stands.

**Future work**

Ruth, Peter and Mark will form a group that will integrate the Vision & Objectives with the agreed SACs to facilitate the 'site sieving' that will follow. To be ready by the date of the next meeting.

It was decided that WGs will now be as follows:

LURD will become the Land Use and Zoning WG (Peter Hill);

Community Engagement, PR and Consultations (Rosalind)

Policy writing (TBA)

**Next meeting: Wednesday 4 February at 7.30 pm at the WTC offices.**