

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

HEATH HAYES, NORTON CANES AND RAWNSLEY COMMUNITY FORUM

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

MONDAY, 9 JULY 2007 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT WIMBLEBURY COMMUNITY CENTRE, JOHN STREET, WIMBLEBURY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Council Forum Members

Councillors:

Bernard, Mrs. A.F. (Chairman)

Beddows, J. (Vice-Chairman)

Bennett, K.L.

Mawle, D.L.

Butler, R.D.

Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Cannock Chase Council Officers

Mr. D. Hoare, Director of Service Improvement

Mr. K. Lawlor, Head of Environmental Services

Mr. J. Heminsley, Planning Services Manager

Mr. J. Morgan, Principal Planner – Planning Policy

Mrs. C. Bowker, Committee Officer

Also Present:

County Councillor J. Toth

Mr. G. Hunt, Partnership District Officer, Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Police

Representatives from the Press

Local Residents (approximately 30)

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. W. Bullock, I.R. Carr, C. Collis, M.J. Holder and County Councillor S. Woodward).

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor Mrs. A.F. Bernard was appointed Chairman and Councillor J. Beddows was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the Municipal Year.

2. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 8 May 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Items from Previous Meeting - Updates

- Speed of lorries along Littleworth Road and the position with respect to weight restriction orders being imposed.
- Resurfacing of Littleworth Road from Beaudesert View to Wimblebury Road.

Mr. G. Hunt explained that at the meeting of the Forum held on 8 May 2007 he had been requested to explore the possibility of placing weight restriction orders on roads in the Cannock Chase AONB. The Forum had considered that this would help reduce the number of HGVs using the Chase and local roads as a shortcut between Rugeley and Cannock.

He reported that a meeting had been held with Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police and other partners with regard to this issue.

It was explained that a Management Plan for the AONB had been agreed by a joint committee of local authorities' statutory bodies and local organisations to ensure the continued conservation of the Chase. The current Management Plan did not contain any policies or measures relating to HGVs and it offered no basis upon which to justify the imposition of Weight Restriction Orders.

There were practical issues that would also limit the impact of Weight Restriction Orders as there were businesses based around the AONB that used HGVs for sand and gravel extraction, road stone manufacture, concrete recycling, agriculture, horse livery and forestry. Due to legislation HGVs suspected of ignoring Weight Restriction Orders had to be followed by the Police from where they entered the restricted area to where they left it and they did not have the resources for this to be done.

The Littleworth Road was a mixture of residential and commercial premises and it was considered that imposing a Weight Restriction Order on the AONB would be difficult to manage and would not guarantee that it would lead to a reduction in HGVs using that road.

There was evidence that satellite navigation systems were providing drivers, especially from abroad, with incorrect information which was leading to an increase of use of non A roads across the county. The Local Government Association could be requested to investigate the scale of the problem and if necessary take the matter up with the manufacturers.

A speed and volume count to record the volume of traffic using the Littleworth Road would be carried out. It was requested that the number of vehicles using Sevens Road as an alternative route also be recorded. Mr. Hunt undertook to relay this request to the Highways Department.

The resurfacing of the Littleworth Road was in the Capital Programme but only £40,000 was currently allocated for investigation and design work only. Mr. Hunt reported that the Highways Department had been asked if this could be used to patch the worst areas and they had agreed to consider this. However, by doing this it may potentially delay the overall scheme.

The Forum expressed concern with respect to S106 funding that had been received with respect to flats that had been built nearby and were informed that it was the Council's current policy to allocate this to providing recreation facilities, education and an appropriate proportion of affordable housing. The S106 funding from small schemes was not used for highways purposes.

Concern was raised as to why resurfacing of the Littleworth Road had been started and then left. Mr. Hunt explained that Cannock Chase Council had formerly, under an agency arrangement with the County, undertaken highways work. The Council had a fund to deal with local emergencies but this was not sufficient to complete the whole job, therefore a stop and start approach was carried out.

The County reassessed the situation when they took back the agency arrangement and carried out a needs approach to how money was allocated. Many roads in the County required work to be carried out, including Stafford Lane and Hill Top, Hednesford where more accidents and fatalities occurred and these were higher in the list of priorities.

Littleworth Road was a major carriageway rebuild which would need to be carried out over two financial years.

The Chairman informed the Forum that copies of Mr. Hunt's report were available for those wishing to take a copy.

4. Local Development Framework

A local resident had raised concern regarding the Local Development Framework and the effect this would have on the Green Belt Land off Cannock Road, Heath Hayes fields between Golds Garages and Cleeton Street, Heath Hayes and land east of Wimblebury Road.

Mr. J. Heminsley gave a brief summary of the background to the Local Development Framework (LDF). He explained that as a local planning authority the Council was required to plan the development of the District up to 2026. There was a requirement to ascertain how much land would be needed to meet housing requirements. The final LDF would be scrutinised by an Independent Inspector appointed by the Government. At an Examination should the LDF be found to be unsound, the Council could be told to 'start again' or have figures imposed.

The LDF was in its early stages. A number of possible options for housing requirements were being considered to meet the current population needs.

In accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Cannock Chase Council would need to provide 6,000 new dwellings under Option 1 and 7,000 under Options 2 and 3 for the years 2001-2026. The Council had asked that 8,500 dwellings be examined and fully debated in order to meet local needs including the need for affordable housing.

The RSS's aim was to encourage regeneration in metropolitan areas rather than the Shire Counties.

The provision of 6,000 new houses required no new land, 7,000 required approximately 15/20 hectares and 8,500 around 50 hectares across the District as a whole.

The Council had opted to look at the higher option as analysis showed the need to provide housing for children leaving home, older people moving to smaller properties and couples separating. These were recognised issues throughout the United Kingdom.

The 8,500 new dwellings would only meet the needs of people already living in the area and excluded migration. It was explained that from 2001 until 1 April 2006, 1,994 dwellings had

been constructed with a further 501 under construction and these should now have been completed. At the start of the RSS revision process although 6,000 additional dwellings could be examined, the Council had currently been asked to commit to 7,000. It was considered that the lower figure would be found 'unsound'.

The LDF was at the Issues and Options stage with publicity and consultation work being undertaken and comments sought. All comments received would be taken into account when moving forward to the preferred option stage.

The Council had a responsibility to provide new housing and at the Issues and Options stage anyone could put a site forward. At present 64 sites had been put forward, the majority of which were from property developers. The land amounted to around 600/700 hectares and the land needed for the highest number of dwellings would be in the region of 50 hectares.

When assessing which sites could be put forward the Council initially looked at existing sites to see which could be used. Green Belt land only being used as a last resort when no realistic alternative was available.

The Forum expressed concern with respect to the amount of properties that were empty and were informed that research regarding this was carried out and factored into the overall plan with respect to the number of houses needed.

Concern was expressed regarding the infrastructure, particularly with respect to the number of schools etc. The Forum was informed that evidence of good infrastructure to support any developments would be required. The ability to protect the environment, safeguard protected and attractive landscapes and sustain future quality of life was a key element.

New developments would be promoted in sustainable locations which were well served by public transport to help reduce the need to use cars. The need to minimise the risk of flooding to residential properties and roads would also have to be taken into consideration.

It was reported that the neighbouring authorities of Stafford and Lichfield had been requested to examine for the development of 12,900 and 16,000 dwellings respectively.

The Planning Services Manager explained that he would speak individually to residents at the close of the Forum to answer any further questions they may have.

5. Central Networks – Power Cuts

The Chairman read out the following update received on 4 July 2007 from Mr. Allan Donaldson from Central Networks:-

"I have been updated by the construction engineer that progress went well with the new cable laying through the town and the last jointing to make both new cables live and complete the work was due last week but floods stopped all planned works. They will now be jointed on 15 July. This completes all the promised Cannock works, however, we now plan further improvements to install even more automation and are trying to get permission to underground a short section of overhead line".

The Forum was concerned with the number of power strikes still taking place. A Member considered that the power company should give compensation to those affected by the power cuts and that Cannock Chase Council should also take action against the company.

Copies of the update provided by Central Networks at the meeting of the Forum in February 2007 were available to those wanting to take a copy.

6. Road Safety in Holly Hill Road

Mr. G. Hunt informed the Forum that a meeting had been held with a representative of Cannock Wood Parish Council and Mr. D. Botfield, Staffordshire County Council. It was reported that it was considered that the issue had been resolved to the satisfaction of the Parish Council.

It was reported that the spoils removed from the ditches protected the carriageway edge as there was no kerbing. Concern was raised that this narrowed the road and that an accident had recently occurred.

Mr. Hunt agreed to investigate this matter further.

7. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman informed the Forum that forms were available for completion for items to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

8. Date of Future Meeting

The Chairman advised the Forum that a meeting had been arranged for Monday, 3 September 2007 at The Theatre, Norton Canes High School, Norton Canes.