

## Item 8b – WALPA UPDATE – EMAIL FROM CAMPBELL RITCHIE 6 MAY 2022.

Please find following a short summary of the Steering Group meeting with Wiltshire Council (WC) at County Hall yesterday.

We met Nick Botterill (Cabinet Member), Georgina Clampitt Dix (Head of Spatial Planning), Chris Roe (Spatial Planning Manager), Mike Kilminster (on Zoom) (Neighbourhood Planning Manager), and Parvis Khansari (Corporate Director for Place). We were represented by Kim (Malmesbury), Graham (Trowbridge), Alan (Calne) Peter (Pewsey) and Steve (Corsham) and myself.

As the meeting was set for just an hour by WC it was never going to cover all the issues. However it was more useful than not.

### **What we learned:**

1. There is little sign the quiet lobbying by WC and our local MPs is persuading government to make the essential changes to the NPPF and 5 Year Housing Land Supply calculation required to reverse the damage being done to support Neighbourhood Planning.
2. Nick has little to no appetite to join us into a joint approach to and with MPs and government. 'He is doing all he can' and 'nothing more can be done'.
3. There was no stated knowledge of what might be in next week's Queen's Speech on planning, if anything.
4. There is some interest in some of the practical proposals we made for presentation to government and for action in Wiltshire.
5. Against this there is work to do to move WC beyond a relationship where it is still easier to 'do to' towns and parish councils with Neighbourhood Plans rather than 'do with'. There is a preference to deliver 'training' rather than engage in explanation, discussion and partnership.
6. There was contrition about the lack of environment and ecology resource that has significantly delayed Reviews for the Neighbourhood Plans that are urgently going through the Review process; hopefully this will now not be a continuing problem.
7. WC will flag to the Planning Inspectorate concerns about lack of consistency in Planning Officer treatment of the significance of the 5YHLS shortfall.
8. There was support for our proposals to be as strong and as time limited as possible on time based progress conditions to be attached to approvals.
9. WC is interested in engaging Neighbourhood Plan councils and non NP councils with providing supporting information into the WC team undertaking 5YHLS reviews. In particular to (i) push builders to making progress with developments with planning permission and (ii) on brownfield, office to housing and windfall sites.
10. WC reported they are not minded to seek any formal legal advice on the substantive question we are investigating on the ability of government to degrade Neighbourhood Plans formed through primary legislation by the operation of NPPF rules. There was no time for discussion on this view or the other questions where we think legal advice would be helpful. (Note: We will continue to get our quotes for discussion as a group).
11. We will be sent a headline response to the points we raised before the meeting but were not discussed. There was not an immediate indication WC is contemplating some brave policy making to support Neighbourhood Plans but the door was not closed.
12. WC is reluctant to commit to a schedule for future meetings with ourselves (either our Steering Group or WALPA as whole and or Neighbourhood Plan groups as a whole). Given past commitments by WC officers (and our own commitment not to expect meetings for meetings sake) this is frustrating (and links to 5. above).

**What next?**

Let's meet on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 10:30 on Zoom. We will know if anything is in the Queen's Speech that might help – or not! We may also have had a response in writing to the meeting and our proposals but we shouldn't hold our breath. Please put this date in your diary. Zoom below:

Topic: WALPA Group Meeting

Time: May 17, 2022 10:30 AM London