

Garforth Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Minutes of steering group meeting held on 27th November 2014

Present: Josie Andrews, Robin Best, John Blake, Dave Clark, Liz Crosland, Emma Grunwell, David LeRoy (chair), Sue McQuire (secretary) Nik Mason, Jane-Anne Parsons, David Pitchfork, Paul Roberts, Alan Tynan, Mike Tonks, Cllr Mark Dobson

Apologies : chris Coyle, James Langley, Tim Staddon, Robert Utley

Declaration of interest - None

The chairman welcomed everyone and introduced Cllr Mark Dobson to update the group on the progress of the city council's Core Strategy and Site Allocations Plan

Mark Dobson

Mark said he welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Garforth Neighbourhood Planning Forum and set some minds at rest concerning issues which had been raised at last week's Steering Group meeting.

Mark confirmed that the revised Core Strategy was now available and the revised Site Allocation Plan would be available in March 2015 for consultation city wide. The Core Strategy does not state that Leeds will have built 70,000 housing units by 2028, it is an aspirational number and they just have to demonstrate the potential.

Mark said that when the initial Site Allocation consultation document had been released he had attended many meetings. Over 3,000 comments had been received from Garforth residents.

He was aware that there were continuing concerns ahead of the revised Site Allocation Plan being released. Recent flooding events and unpopular developments at Town End and Garforth Cliff had added to concerns about infrastructure and traffic congestion problems.

In his capacity as a local councillor Mark said he had visited contentious sites in Garforth including land alongside Wakefield Road, Pass Land adjacent to Selby Road, land alongside the road to Barwick beyond the railway bridge at Town End and land adjacent to the Eastern boundary of Garforth from Cedar ridge, along the back of the East Garforth estate, to Ludlow Avenue. His view was that these locations were inappropriate for further development given well known chronic problems in Garforth including flooding and traffic congestion along the length of the A642. These were no-go areas and he wanted them removed from the Site Allocation Plan.

He recommended that the forum concentrate on alternatives to these locations although he conceded that it would be sensible to prepare a case to support their exclusion.

Mark was aware that brown belt land within Garforth would become available as commercial organisations relocated and that it might be thought attractive to infill these spaces with housing. His view was that this would not be desirable because it would further add to chronic school places, school access, water drainage and sewage system and traffic congestion issues.

Mark commented upon the high density of housing in Garforth and pointed to the lack of green space and social amenities. Mark favoured a creative plan which included designated greenfield space around Garforth to keep Garforth separate from other settlements.

Mark was not in favour of further commercial development at Town End which would add to A642 traffic problems. He was in favour of the Miami site developed as a supermarket subject to planning.

Rather than bolt-on and in-fill developments Mark speculated that a standalone settlement might allow Garforth to contribute to the Outer South East area need for new housing without putting further pressure on its existing communities. He asked what such a development might look like, where it would be located, what schools it would require, what its drainage needs and road provision would it require?

The meeting talked about the discussions which had taken place with representatives from Aberford at the last Steering Group meeting. The packet of land between Cedar Ridge and the motorway roundabout had been identified as being in Aberford's Parish boundary but not in their Development Plan. It was thought that unless this land was in Garforth's Development Plan it could become a target for developers which could not be challenged. However, Mark indicated that senior council planning officers had advised him that this would not make the land vulnerable to speculative housing development. Garforth is in a unique position and may become a test case in the UK. Mark is working with the MP to try and resolve this issue which may have to be taken to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Past unsuccessful appeals had made clear that it was necessary for LCC to demonstrate that it had viable plans which provided 5 years land supply (none of which is in Garforth). The council had a target of 60/40 brown to green belt mix for further development but it was not clear how such a strategic aim might be enacted.

During the question and answer session which followed a number of points were made:

- The impression had been given at the previous meeting by a planning representative that unless Garforth's development plan was completed quickly the Forum would have to work within the decisions in the revamped Core Strategy and Site Allocation plans. Members felt this called in to question the value of creating a forum or going on to create a Development Plan.

- A member of the Forum had also been told that in the main when housing locations were being sought it was invariably 'the biggest settlements who took the hit'.
- Mark talked about his early involvement and support for establishing a forum but felt that recently he was getting mixed messages from the group.
- The Chair of the Site Allocation Sub-group said the Forum had an enthusiastic sub-group, with well attended meetings, which was seeking to undertake constructive planning activities but the delay in publication of the revised Site Allocation plan would make it difficult to identify what these should be.
- What is the need/ requirement for social housing. Mark said that social housing could not be reserved for Garforth residents, an alternative might be to allocate housing to be 'part buy' in order to help local families
- At a recent meeting a member of the Site Allocation Sub-group stated that she had received a letter from LCC, which she was to respond to by 23 Dec, asking her views on the compulsory purchase of her land adjacent to one of Garforth's main trunk roads.
- Mark was asked about timescales for the Development Plan. He responded that involving a senior planning officer would help the forum progress the plan as quickly as possible.
- Members stated that the planning officer at the last Steering meeting had made them aware that Parish councils received information about new planning applications and their views were considered as part of approval/refusal process. The Steering group had been told that Forums did not have the same rights or part to play in the process. This again called into question the benefits of establishing a Forum. The Garforth Neighbourhood Planning forum needs to communicate directly with the LCC Planning Department.
- Mark was asked whether it might be helpful to liaise with developers when researching and planning a proposal for a standalone development. Mark replied that each developer had its own business strategy but he was aware that some socially aware developers might be supportive.
- Mark was asked if a proposal might be developed with a neighbouring Forum or Parish in the Outer South East Area and he agreed that this would be helpful particularly as there was the potential for some shared leisure facilities as the housing allocation is not just for Garforth but for the Outer South East

area. There was no reason why (in conjunction with other villages) a new settlement could not cross the Ridge Road.

- Mark said that we need to get an outline plan in place by / before March 2015 as the revised site allocations plan would be due for public consultation, however we need clarification on what we have to produce and by when.
- Would LCC be actively refusing building applications? Mark replied that as Leeds has a 5 year plan to supply housing sites for 5 years there will be no more permission given until our plan has been accepted.
- Mark offered to attend a future Steering Group meeting, in the few weeks, to answer any further questions that arose and help take plans forward. He also offered to attend sub-group meetings if invited to help address any immediate needs or concerns.

Minutes of meeting 16th October – accepted

Matters arising – The constitution states that the steering group should have 11 members with an additional 3 co-opted. We now have 19 since additional people put their names forward at the AGM. To be discussed at the next meeting.

Minutes of joint groups meeting held on 30th October – Accepted

Matters arising – none

Minutes of meeting held on 20th November – Accepted

Matters arising - Date set for next session with Shaun Hanson Wednesday 10th December, time to be confirmed. **Action – D. LeRoy.** David suggested that 1 person attend from each sub group and most of the steering group

AOB - Alan Tynan reported that further funding from Locality will be available in March 15.

Date of next meeting Thursday 15th January 2015