

## PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP (PIWG)

**Summary:** To review the progress of the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group and planning-related activity.

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Committee notes the report.

**Report by:** John Mills, Planning Lead

### MEMBERS OF THE GROUP (following the Board AGM on 16 July 2024)

- Nigel Adcock, Local Authority Board Member
- David Broad, Parish Council Member
- Liz Hodges, Parish Council Board Member
- Graham Hopkins, Secretary of State (SoS) Board Member (Chair)
- Cate Le Grice Mack, SoS Board Member
- Caroline Mumford, Cotswold Voluntary Warden
- Ray Sanderson, Parish Council Member
- Officers: John Mills, Planning Lead; Simon Joyce, Planning Officer

N.B. Thanks to Martin Horwood for his contributions as a PIWG member until 16 July 2024. Welcome to David and Ray as new PIWG members.

### PIWG MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- The last PIWG meeting was on 16 April 2024. The next PIWG meeting is scheduled for 12 September. A verbal update on this meeting will be provided at the Executive Committee meeting.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) DATA

- In Q1 (April – June 2024) we provided a substantive response to 96% (24/25) of pro-active planning applications consultations, above our primary consultation thresholds, by the original deadline. For reference, the average for 2023/24 was 86% (86/100). Our target range is 70-94%.

### OTHER PLANNING-RELATED QUARTERLY DATA

- In Q1, we commented on 20 'major' planning applications. For reference, the total for 2023/24 was 89 responses (i.e. average of 22 per quarter).
- In Q1, we commented on 23 'minor' planning applications. For reference, the total for 2023/24 was 100 responses (i.e. average of 25 per quarter).
- In Q1, decisions were made on 7 development management proposals that we had objected to and hadn't withdrawn our objection to. 6 of these were refused, withdrawn or disposed of (i.e. in line with the Board's recommendations) and one was permitted. So, in Q1, 86% (6 out of 7) were in line with the Board's recommendations. The average for 2023/24 was 54% (15 out of 28).

## OTHER PLANNING-RELATED ACTIVITY

- Other planning-related activity since the last PIWG report for the Executive Committee meeting on 21 May 2024 includes:
  - **National Landscapes Association (NLA) Secondment:** John concluded his NLA secondment in July 2024, with the submission of two reports – one on the findings of the survey on the 'seek to further' duty and one on the potential implications of the 'seek to further' duty for the National Planning Policy Framework. As part of the secondment, John gave a presentation to a national landscapes lead officers' meeting on 5 June and co-led a workshop on the 'seek to further' duty at the NLA Conference on 3 July.
  - **NLA Planning and Placemaking Community of Practice:** The task and finish group that John set up for his NLA secondment has now evolved into a NLA Planning & Placemaking Community of Practice (CoP). The work of the CoP has included developing a draft advice note on the 'seek to further' duty for local planning authorities, which John has provided comments on.
  - **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation:** At the end of July, the Government consulted on an updated version of the NPPF. John is currently developing a consultation response on behalf of the Board and is also contributing to a consultation response by the NLA. The consultation deadline is 24 September.
  - **Local Plan consultations:**
    - **Local Plan meetings:** John has had meetings with Wiltshire Council (19 June), South Gloucestershire Council (27 June) and Bath and North East Somerset Council (1 July) to discuss the consultation responses that we had submitted in relation to their draft local plans.
    - **South Gloucestershire Local Plan – Topic Paper for Housing Land Supply and Bristol Unmet Need:** John is currently drafting a response to this consultation, for which the deadline is 13 September.
  - **Significant planning-related decisions:**
    - **24/01272/OUT – 16 dwellings at Church Road, Milton Under Wychwood (West Oxfordshire District Council):** This application was refused by WODC's Uplands Planning Sub-Committee in line with the recommendation of officers. Officers agreed with the Board's assessment that the proposed development would not complement the settlement pattern of the village and would harm the character and appearance of the area. They also considered that the development, by reason of its siting and extent, would fail to conserve or enhance landscape and scenic beauty within the Cotswold National Landscape, as well as harming the rural setting and key views from adjacent PRoWs and the village green.
    - **S.24/0567/FUL – 15 dwellings at Old Town, Wotton-under-Edge (Stroud District Council):** This application on a site in the centre of Wotton-under-Edge sought permission to convert a former

schoolhouse and office building to four dwellings as well as erect a block containing 11 apartments. In refusing the application under delegated powers, officers concurred with the Board's assessment that the development, due to its location, size, scale and mass is such that the proposals would appear as a visually incongruous addition to the character and appearance of the conservation area which contributes to the wider character of the landscape and Cotswolds National Landscape. This would result in a significant and harmful impact upon the layout, character and appearance of the existing site and settlement, as well as the wider National Landscape.

- **S.21/2579/OUT – Employment development for B8 (Storage & Distribution) uses at Javelin Park, Haresfield (Stroud District Council):** Stroud's Development Control Committee granted permission for 105,000sqm of warehousing on this site adjacent to the Javelin Park incinerator which lies within the setting of the CNL and is a draft allocation in the emerging Stroud Local Plan Review. Objections had been submitted by the Board, Natural England, the National Trust and local Parish Councils and officers acknowledged that despite amendments having been made by the applicant including reducing the height of the buildings and amending the materials used, the scheme does result in significant residual landscape and visual effects due to the scale of the proposal and the elevated nature of views from the escarpment. However, Members agreed with officers that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh any identified harms.
- **Significant planning applications that we have objected to (since the last Executive Committee meeting):**
  - **24/00393/OUT – 35 dwellings south of Beckford Road, Alderton (Tewkesbury Borough Council):** The Board objected to this application due to an assessed increase in traffic movements in excess of 10% along Beckford Road which marks the CNL boundary, contrary to the Board's guidance on tranquillity outlined within our Tranquillity Position Statement.
  - See also 24/01272/OUT and S.24/0567/FUL, above, which were both consulted on and decided since the last Executive Committee meeting.
- **Miscellaneous:**
  - **24/01143.OUT – Innovation Village, Royal Agricultural University (Cotswold District Council):** This is a proposal for a mixed-use development named The Innovation Village associated with research and innovation across the food production, climate change and land health and management sectors, comprising up to 27,600sqm of office, research and development, education, conferencing and café space. We considered this proposal to constitute major development. However, we did not object as we

considered that exceptional circumstances applied to justify the proposal.

- **Cotswolds Visual Impact Provision (VIP) Project:** The Cotswolds VIP Project is the proposed removal of 18 pylons and the undergrounding of 7km of high voltage cables between Winchcombe and Dowdeswell. The Board has been consulted on planning applications for cable sealing end compounds (CSEC) at Postlip (in Tewkesbury Borough) and at Whittington (in Cotswold District), which will be an integral part of the VIP project. Whilst we support the overall Cotswolds VIP project, we originally submitted a holding objection to the Postlip CSEC proposal because we considered it to be major development and we considered that there was potentially scope for additional landscape mitigation measures. However, we withdrew the holding objection as we were concerned that the holding objection might jeopardise the overall scheme. The deadline for the consultation on the Whittington CSEC is 18 September. John is currently arranging a site visit with National Grid and their consultants.
- **Lime Down Solar Farm:** Simon provided the Board's response to the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping consultation for the proposed Lime Down Solar Farm which extends to 900ha across five sites south and southwest of Malmesbury in Wiltshire. Three of the five sites are either located directly adjacent to the CNL boundary near Sherston and Alderton or extend to within 200m of the CNL's boundary at their closest point.
- **Management Plan:** John has provided input into the development of the 2025-2030 iteration of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan included providing draft text and participating in a management plan workshop with local authority colleagues on 11 July.

## DECISIONS REQUIRED

- No decisions required.

## NEXT STEPS

- Key work areas over the next few months will include:
  - Submitting our response – and contributing to the NLA response - to the NPPF consultation (deadline = 24 September).
  - Continuing to provide input into the Cotswolds Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project.
  - Drafting and consulting on a new Minerals & Waste Position Statement.

## NO SUPPORTING PAPERS

SEPTEMBER 2024