

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 and Landscape Lead

MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

- Liz Hodges (Chair), Parish Council Board Member
- Cate Le Grice Mack, SoS Board Member
- Steve Bucknell, Local Authority Board Member (Wiltshire Council)
- Caroline Mumford, Cotswolds Voluntary Warden
- Sue Crawford, SoS Board Member
- Officers: John Mills, Planning and Landscape Lead, Simon Joyce, Planning Officer, Mandy Pressland, Office Manager (providing admin support)

PIWG MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. A joint PIWG and Climate Action Working Group meeting was held on 15 March 2023. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the updated, draft Renewable Energy Position Statement and to approve it for going out to external consultation.
2. There will be further joint meeting of the two working groups on 26 May 2023 to review the final draft of the Renewable Energy Position Statement and to approve it to go to the Board for adoption in June 2023.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) DATA

3. In Q4 (January-March 2023) we provided a substantive response to 93% (27 out of 29) of pro-active planning application consultations, above our primary consultation thresholds, by the original deadline. The average for 2022/23 was 91% (89 out of 98).
4. This is above our target range of 65-89%. However, our Planning Officer, Simon Joyce, considers that this higher level of performance is sustainable in the longer term. As such, we are intending to change our target range to 70-94% in 2023/24.

OTHER PLANNING-RELATED QUARTERLY DATA

5. In Q4 we commented on 23 'major' planning applications bringing the total for 2022/23 to 98 responses.
6. In Q4 we commented on 27 'minor' planning applications, bringing the total for 2023/23 to 91 responses.
7. It is worth noting that we provide bespoke responses to the majority of the major planning applications, whereas we just provide a standard response to some minor planning applications. As such, the amount of time spent on minor applications is less than for major applications.
8. In Q4, decisions were made on 13 development management applications that we had objected to (and hadn't withdrawn our objection). 58% of the decisions (7 out of 13) were in line with the Board's recommendations (i.e. refused permission or withdrawn prior to a decision being made). This brings the average for 2022/23 to 68% (28 out of 41).
9. Simon Joyce is reviewing these decisions and will present a paper on this topic to PIWG in due course.

OTHER PLANNING-RELATED ACTIVITY

10. Other planning-related activity since the last PIWG report for the Executive Committee meeting on 24 January 2023 includes:

- **Renewable Energy Position Statement:** An updated draft of the Renewable Energy Position Statement was circulated for external consultation (following PIWG / CAWG approval) on 24 March. The consultation ended on 5 May, although the deadline has been extended for some stakeholders on request. John is currently compiling these responses and will circulate a finalised draft of the Position Statement to PIWG and CAWG by 22 May. As indicated above, the finalised draft will be discussed at a PIWG / CAWG meeting on 26 May, with the intention that the two working groups will approve the Position Statement to go forward for adoption by the Board in June.
- **Neighbourhood Planning Position Statement:** Simon circulated the draft Neighbourhood Planning Position Statement for external consultation in early March. The consultation ran until mid-April. We received a limited number of responses, which were positive overall. Simon will be circulating an updated draft of the Position Statement to PIWG by 19 May for them to approve it going for adoption by the Board in June.
- **Government consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** John wrote – and consulted on - the response of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).
- **Southern Protected Landscapes Planning Officers Group:** John held his second meeting as Chair of this group, which brings together planning-related officers from AONBs and National Parks across southern England, on 8 February 2023.
- **Truck Stop appeal:** John spoke at the planning appeal inquiry relating to the proposed truck stop near Daglingworth on 31 January 2023. The inquiry is ongoing.
- **Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan Review:** John provided input into finalising the wording of the Management Plan before it went to the Board in Feb.
- **A417 'Missing Link' scheme:** John attended a meeting with the consultants, Kier, and other stakeholders, on 18 April 2023 to discuss potential changes to the proposed dry-stone walling that would form part of the Missing Link scheme.
- **Renewable energy and woodland opportunity mapping:** John wrote a brief and obtained quotes for a project to identify opportunity areas for renewable energy and woodland opportunity mapping in the Cotswolds National Landscape. We are currently considering potential options for funding this work.
- **Significant planning-related decisions in line with our recommendations (since the last Executive Committee meeting):**
 - **22/03179/OUT (70 residential units; Land East of Barn Lane, Burford) (West Oxfordshire District Council):** This is the latest of several planning applications for development at this site, with previous proposals having been refused at appeal. The site plays an important role in the setting of Burford. The proposal constitutes major development and does not demonstrate the necessary exceptional circumstances.
 - **22/04004/FUL (40-bedroom hotel; Grafters, Fosseyway, Lower Slaughter) (Cotswold District Council):** This proposal is adjacent to the proposed electric car charging service station on the Fosseyway, which was approved at

appeal. The hotel proposal was refused permission because of its visual impacts and a lack of demonstrable need.

- **Significant planning-related decisions not in line with our recommendations (since the last Executive Committee meeting):**
 - **21/00496/FUL (110 dwellings; Land West of Delavale Road, Winchcombe) (Tewkesbury Borough Council):** This site was allocated in the Tewkesbury Borough Plan for 80 dwellings. The Board considered that the increase in the number of dwellings was not appropriate and that the development would protrude incongruously onto the slopes of Langley Hill. The Borough Council considered that the impacts were not significant and that housing need justified the increased quantum of housing.
 - **22/0133/OUT (150 dwellings; Land North of Witney Road, Long Hanborough) (West Oxfordshire District Council):** The proposed development is in the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Our main concern related to a potential increase in traffic movements through the CNL. We submitted a holding objection requesting further assessment of this issue. However, planning permission was granted without this information being provided.
 - **22/03294/S73 (Variation of conditions relating to an existing planning permission for 25 dwellings; Land South of Forest Road, Charlbury) (West Oxfordshire District Council):** The proposed variations related to the layout of the proposed development, with these variations bringing the built development closer to the adjacent woodland. We did not consider it appropriate for this to happen, especially given that the proposed development would already be closer to the ancient woodland than the buffer zone that is recommended in Natural England guidance. However, the District Council considered the proposed variations to be relatively minor and granted planning permission. Interestingly, this planning permission has now been quashed by the High Court, in a judicial review brought forward by the Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds. The judge considered that there was not sufficient justification to allow the proposed variations.

11. Since the Executive Committee meeting on 24 January 2023, we have responded to one Local Plan consultation relating to the South Warwickshire Local Plan. This brings the total number of local plan consultation response in 2022/23 to eight. The number of Local Plan consultations seems to have slowed down, pending potential changes to the NPPF.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

12. No decisions required.

NEXT STEPS

13. A joint PIWG / CAWG meeting will be held on 26 May, as outlined above.
14. A PIWG meeting will be scheduled in the summer, following the Board's AGM.
15. Key work areas over the next few months will include:
 - Securing the adoption of the Renewable Energy Position Statement and Neighbourhood Planning Position Statement at the Board meeting on 27 June.

NO SUPPORTING PAPERS