

**NOTES FROM THE PLANNING AND
INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP MEETING
27 OCTOBER 2020**



ATTENDING

- PIWG members: Liz Hodges (LH) (Chair), Brendan Costelloe (BC), Mike Dean (MD), Graham Hopkins (GH), Cate Le Grice-Mack (CLGM)
- Lead officer: John Mills (JM)
- Supporting officer (volunteer): Arthur Griffiths (AG)

APOLOGIES

- Matt Darby (MD)

AGENDA ITEM 1: INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- LH opened the meeting by welcoming those present.
- JM stated that Matt Darby, a PIWG member, might not be available for the meeting (JM sent him another email at this point).
- JM introduced AG, the Cotswold Conservation Board's (CCB) planning volunteer.

AGENDA ITEM 2: NOTES FROM PREVIOUS PIWG MEETING (ACTIONS)

- **Actions completed:**
 - Draft and circulate revised PIWG Terms of Reference
 - Draft revision circulated on 18/05/2020.
 - Amended revision circulated on 22/05/2020.
 - JM to circulate doodle poll with potential dates for next meeting.
 - JM to consult PIWG on planning consultations that match the Board's draft consultation criteria – and Local Plan / Transport Plan consultations - as soon as he receives them.
- **Actions still outstanding:**
 - See 'actions arising' document for PIWG meeting on 27 October 2020.

AGENDA ITEM 3: PLANNING REFORMS

- JM noted that whilst the Government talks about maintaining protections for AONBs in their planning reforms, this does not seem achievable with the current proposals, especially the method for assessing housing need – if anything, this skews housing provision towards protected landscapes.
- JM asked whether the group were happy with the three key messages he proposed to be included in the CCB's response to the Government's White Paper.
- CLGM expressed some concerns with the White Paper: the lack of references to climate change, and appropriate and affordable housing. She suggested that the CCB should raise these points in its response.
- LH said that the White Paper does not discuss what could be done in urban areas. BC concurred, adding that the planning system must operate at the right spatial scale to create a coherent strategy for delivering housing (i.e. focussing on urban areas and relieving pressure in protected landscapes like the Cotswolds). LH pointed out that a lack cross-boundary work at a regional scale can lead to the erosion of the edges of the AONB (for example, in the Cheltenham area). As such, LH and BC both felt that this matter should be included in the CCB's response.
- LH also requested for the three key messages to be made stronger.

- JM felt that, in order for the response to be manageable, it would not be possible to answer all of the questions. CLGM and BC were concerned that failing to answer the rigid questions could lead to ideas being missed or not forwarded to the correct people.
- LH went on to argue that the premise of the White Paper (that building more houses will lead to a fall in prices) is incorrect. She proposed that the CCB should state this.
- LH also shared that she was worried about the fact that a housing development only has to provide affordable housing if over fifty dwellings are being constructed.
- BC felt that the CCB should say more about affordable housing – there should be a greater proportion in the Cotswolds.
- A discussion about affordable and social housing ensued. GH and CLGM felt that the provision of socially rented housing is important. Several members agreed that it is imperative that that housing within the AONB is secure, affordable, and within the incomes that prevail in the area. GH pointed out that affordable housing can be purchasable or provided for rent. JM noted that these points are in the Management Plan, which can be referenced in the CCB's response. Following BC's suggestion, JM will signpost to organisations with this area of expertise (e.g. Shelter and the Gloucestershire Rural Housing Partnership) in the response.
- JM advised that he will not have the time to share a draft version of the response with PIWG.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 3:**
 - JM to circulate CCB's final response among the local MPs (and possibly the Secretary of State appointees).
 - JM to beef up the part about affordable housing and housing need in the Cotswolds.
 - JM to also incorporate the other suggested points in the response.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PLANNING APPLICATION 20/0293/FUL (STABLE COMPLEX, NAUNTON DOWNS GOLF CLUB)

- It was felt that JM's second response was 'spot on'.
- JM noted that he will not always have the capacity to provide detailed, bespoke responses to planning applications.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 4:**
 - None.

AGENDA ITEM 5: STATUTORY DUTY TO SEEK TO FOSTER THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- Northcot Brick brickworks, Paxford, have been looking to expand their work; PIWG have been concerned about the implications of this, such as increased HGV movements.
- However, the brickworks provide jobs within the Cotswolds.
- GH questioned whether the CCB should object at the expense of what could be good for the Cotswolds' rural economy.
- The CROW Act mentions fostering the economic and social wellbeing of communities within the AONB. Likewise, the annual report of the National Association of AONBs states that protecting natural heritage should be balanced with providing ways for local communities and businesses to prosper. Thirdly, the LEADER Programme supports micro and small businesses and farm diversification. Therefore, GH argued that there is some support for local economic development in protected landscapes. GH queried whether this should be taken into account in the CCB's responses.
- JM noted that while encouraging economic wellbeing is a statutory duty, it is not part of CCB's two statutory purposes. However, it may become a third purpose in the future.
- GH suggested that the CCB should express support for the economic benefits a development would bring, but state that other things must be considered, like conserving and enhancing the landscape. He proposed that this should be included in the CCB's standard response.

- BC believes that, where there is a conflict, the priority should be afforded to the special qualities of the Cotswolds.
- BC recommended getting in touch with councils for advice on what industries would create a diverse economy for a range of skills.
- JM agreed that social and economic wellbeing should be addressed in CCB's consultation responses. However, he emphasised that it is not CCB's responsibility to balance economic, social, and environmental issues – that falls within the remit of the planning authorities.
- JM revealed that there is currently an idea to create a small group of Board members to develop a vision of what the Cotswolds could and should be. As well as conserving the area's natural beauty, this vision would include social and economic aspects. It was felt that PIWG should be involved in helping to define this vision.
- BC suggested that it would be better for a task and finish group to do this, so that different areas of expertise are taken into account.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 5:**
 - JM to inform Andy Parsons that PIWG would like to play a role in the process of developing this vision.

AGENDA ITEM 6: LICENSING AND THE DUTY OF REGARD (PIPLEY BARN)

- The Pipley Barn case study was discussed. The minutes of the licensing sub-committee suggest that the AONB was not taken into account during the decision-making process.
- CLGM queried whether JM had received feedback from Paul Crossley's site visit. JM said that the conclusions were that the cars were parked in the designated parking spaces, and there was not much vehicle movement along public rights of way. This suggests that the impacts of the proposal might not be as significant as some of the local residents perceive. However, the site visit only provided a snapshot, so there may be some variation on a day-to-day basis.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 6:**
 - JM to write to local authorities next year (2021) to emphasise that duty of regard should always be addressed (where relevant), including in licensing decisions.

AGENDA ITEM 7: PIWG ENGAGEMENT IN THE BOARD'S PLANNING-RELATED WORK

- A new process has been in place since April. JM has been engaging with PIWG to a greater degree, by forwarding relevant applications and consultations as soon as they are brought to his attention (JM currently forwards up to four emails a week).
- JM is responding to more planning applications, which has increased his workload.
- JM asked for thoughts on how things have changed, whether he is consulting PIWG too much, and whether anything should change.
 - BC and CLGM felt that it was not necessary to forward everything for input from PIWG. It would be better to only forward things that they can help to shape ahead of time.
 - GH, LH and MD are fond of the current arrangement. GH queried whether their responses are of any use to JM. JM stated that they are, as they often remind him to address issues that he does not always automatically address (e.g. social and economic aspects, potential benefits of the proposed development, etc.). Also, when he receives a strong reaction from several PIWG members, it indicates to him that an application is a particular cause for concern.
- CLGM added that she believes that the opening of the standard response should be more positive.
- LH closed this agenda item by thanking JM for all of his hard work and for engaging with PIWG
- **Actions arising from agenda item 7:**

- JM to produce a planning pack for parish councils (containing things for them to be aware of when responding to planning applications and how they should take account of the AONB in developing their neighbourhood plans).
- JM to produce a simplified version of the Planning & Development and Housing Position Statements in relation to neighbourhood plans (and / or produce an updated Neighbourhood Plans Position Statement).

AGENDA ITEM 8: CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- JM pointed out that the new standard response is, in fact, “substantive” according a definition found within legislation.
- JM deviated off the agenda to discuss planning admin support. All consultation emails currently arrive in JM’s inbox, and it takes up to two days a week for him to work through them. In the short term (for the next six months), a generic shared inbox will be set up so that AG can monitor the emails, forwarding those meeting the consultation criteria to JM. This will give JM more time to focus on his other work priorities.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 8:**
 - JM to change the wording of the standard response – replace “substantive” with “comprehensive”.

AGENDA ITEM 9: QUARTERLY REVIEW DATA

- As the meeting was overrunning, there was no time to discuss this.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 9:**
 - JM to share the quarterly review data with PIWG via email.

AGENDA ITEM 10: STATUTORY CONSULTEE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- JM is trying to respond to consultations as if CCB were a statutory consultee.
- One of the requirements of being a statutory consultee is that you have to provide an annual report to the Secretary of State.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 10:**
 - JM to put a system in place in Q3 to monitor how CCB is performing against statutory consultee requirements.

AGENDA ITEM 11: OTHER CURRENT PRIORITIES

- The A417 consultation is currently live. Andy Parsons has taken the lead on compiling the initial draft, which will be passed on to JM in the coming week. This will be then shared with the A417 steering group. The CCB’s response has to be submitted by 11 November.
- JM hopes that a paper will go to the Executive, but he is unsure whether that will be the full draft documents.
- The CCB has agreed to become a Rule 6 party in the planning appeal for a proposed development of fifty dwellings in Gotherington. CCB became a Rule 6 party as the decision to refuse planning permission was largely based on the CCB’s response. If the appeal is dismissed, JM believes that this would put CCB in a stronger position for commenting on applications in the Cheltenham/Bishops Cleeve area in the future.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 11:**
 - JM to identify realistic timeframe for the consultation on the draft position statements – to discuss with Andy Parsons.

AGENDA ITEM 12: OTHER BUSINESS

- No other business.

AGENDA ITEM 13: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The date will depend on JM's revised programme for the position statements, given that it would be useful for PIWG to discuss them before they are finalised. Therefore, JM suggested that the next meeting should be held in January.
- **Actions arising from agenda item 13:**
 - JM to circulate Doodle poll with potential dates for next meeting.