
MEETING	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP
DATE	7 SEPTEMBER 2009
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS STEVE GALLOWAY (CHAIR), POTTER (VICE-CHAIR), SIMPSON-LAING, MERRETT, R WATSON, WATT AND REID
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS D'AGORNE

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Watson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 4 as he acts for clients on Public Rights of Way matters.

Councillor Watson also declared a personal interest in item 5 as he acts for clients who are major landowners at Derwenthorpe.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous two meetings of the Local Development Framework Group, held on 6 and 20 April 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Minutes of the meeting on 6 April 2009

On Page 7 of the agenda. This should read that Cllrs. Simpson-Laing, Merrett and Potter voted against recommendations 1 to 3 only, and not against recommendation 4.

Minutes of the meeting on 20 April 2009:

Page 10 of the agenda, minute 33.(ii) should refer to the LDF Working group held on the 6 March not the 3rd as stated and the words 'preventing coalescence between the ring road and Murton to be added to the italics after the word 'Green Wedge'.

Page 14 5th paragraph, minute 35, should read 'the document should incorporate three further options for consideration plus a further 4th option put forward by the Labour Group'.

Page 15 Section 3 bullet point 4 should read 'Distinction to be made between flood zones 3a and 3b on the map'.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that two people had registered to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Tom Hughes, from the Meadlands Area Residents Association commented on the minutes of the 20 April meeting, in particular on page 11 of the agenda, minute item 34 which referred to the protection of the Green Belt and the discussions, which were held at Full Council surrounding it on 2 April 2009. He advised that he is concerned that there has been no resume of what was agreed and that the LDF Core Strategy seems to be moving on with no further mention of the matter. He also expressed his dismay that himself and his colleagues had written to the leader but not received a response.

Mark Warters addressed the Working Group on behalf of York Natural Environment Trust. He queried how the LDF Core Strategy proposes to protect open spaces in areas which are deficient of such spaces. He distributed two letters on the matter which had not been responded to by Officers. Members requested that Officers ensure they reply to the correspondence.

4. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

Members considered a report which set out the current local position in terms of national, regional and sub-regional context including the work undertaken with Natural England, relevant local evidence base and how Green Infrastructure is addressed through the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Green Infrastructure relates to all green assets. It is the physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages. It is a network of multifunctional open spaces including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees, nature reserves and open countryside. The Green Infrastructure of York is a key priority for the LDF process and work has continued towards ensuring that it is embedded within the Core Strategy along with the production of a Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Officers updated that work has continued with Natural England and with adjacent Local Authorities to map Green Corridors and that the next stage will be to establish a hierarchy of corridors, at regional, district and local level.

Members discussed and raised various concerns about the Green Infrastructure work to date, to which Officers responded.

- A Member expressed concern that instead of concluding the work on Green Corridors, the report seemed to be pushing the conclusion

of the work further into the future. Officers explained that the work on Green Infrastructure is work in progress and due to the number of different strands to it, such as the cycle network and biodiversity audit, it is a fluid process and it is not the intention to put it off.

- A Member expressed concern over the wording in paragraph 29 of the officers report which states 'green infrastructure work is not about applying restrictions to future development'. The Member felt that the point of Green Infrastructure work, in particular Green Corridors, is to improve the quality of life in the City and where appropriate, form a constraint on future developments. Officers advised that they would expect the Green Infrastructure to be used as tool in urban planning and that the Council already had in place, strong existing policies for protecting open space green wedges and other forms of green infrastructure.
- Members commented that the Natural England approach, using a function matrix was missing green sites within built up areas such as tree lined corridors and rail corridors and that such sites should be included. It was also recognised that the function matrix should be amended to reflect the weighting of different functions such as nationally important nature conservation sites, and functional flood plans. Members identified sites within their Wards such as Acomb Wood and Badger Hill field, which had been missed. Members suggested that the next stage in the process should be to use local knowledge by holding a consultation with Ward Members to ensure such sites are not missed out.

RESOLVED:

- (i) A consultation with Ward Members to be undertaken by Officers to identify local green corridors in order to bring the consideration of local green corridors to a conclusion.
- (ii) That the production of the Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document be aligned with the production of the Core Strategy to be referred back to the LDF Working Group.
- (iii) That the natural England function matrix should be amended to reflect the weighting of different functions and that the additional areas as identified by members such as railway land and tree lined corridors be included.

REASON: So that further work can be progressed to support the emerging Core Strategy and wider LDF.

5. BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

Members received a report which requested the LDF Working Group to recommend to the Council's Executive that they approve the Biodiversity Audit, subject to recommendations of the group, as evidence base to support the Local Development Framework.

The Biodiversity Audit identifies species and habitats which are of national or local conservation concern and provides baseline information on which to prioritise any further action. Species and habitat action plans will be developed for these priorities with specific targets and proposals for action. The initial "City of York Biodiversity Audit" took place in 1996, but this was essentially a review of the City's known wildlife and not intended to be a local strategy or action plan. Since then the criteria used by Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to establish Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) has been changed. This, along with the decision to develop the Local Development Framework, has meant all existing data needed to be reviewed.

Officers advised members that there has never been an overall survey of York and its sites and species of interest and that initially aerial photographs of York were studied on a field by field basis to identify possible sites of interest. 300 plus sites were identified which have now been surveyed and subdivided into categories of high to low interest.

Following a presentation, Member's made the following comments:

- Concerns were raised on the issue of buffering and how areas adjacent to sites of interest can be used to help protect such sites and how areas need to be included in any policies. Officers advised that work will be undertaken to ensure that the Core Strategy Policy is worded correctly to enable the correct assessment of such areas to be carried out.
- Member's expressed concern that some areas appeared to be missing from the audit such as railway land. Officers explained that there are problems with railway owned land such as the high fees charged to obtain access. Members asked that railway land be identified in the document as areas of potential interest and be investigated further if necessary.
- Members queried whether the document should be subject to public consultation. Officers advised a SINC panel would be set up to look at wider consultation, particularly at social value sites. Members were reminded that confidentiality is important as some sites are private land and not publicly accessible.

RESOLVED: (i) That the biodiversity audit be approved for publication as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

REASON: So that the Biodiversity Audit can be used as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base and to avoid delays to the Core Strategy production.

RESOLVED: (ii) delegate to the Director of City Strategy, in consultation with the Executive Member and Shadow Executive Member for City Strategy, the making of any incidental changes arising from the recommendation of the LDF Working Group, and further survey information prior to its publication as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

REASON: So that any recommended changes can be incorporated into the Biodiversity Audit.

Cllr S F Galloway, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 6.05 pm].