

## **Public Questions**

**Full Council 24 September 2019.**

### **1) Member of Public**

#### **Question**

*1) I note that TDC has produced*

*a) A Communication Strategy 2017-2021 and*

*b) A Statement of Community Involvement – May 2019*

*Are these documents a statutory requirement or recommended best practice?*

*2) Can you describe how the requirements of these documents are put into practice, monitored and enforced - with examples?*

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning**

1 b) - The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a Statutory Requirement

2 b) - Plan Making

The SCI policies are used as the basis for our consultation procedures on all planning policy documents including local plans, supplementary planning documents and Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedules. Achievement of the SCI is therefore built in from the start. A consultation plan specific to each local plan will go into more detail. The Planning Inspector considering a local plan will consider whether the SCI requirements have been met.

#### **Neighbourhood Plans**

The SCI policies indicate the level of support for neighbourhood planning which the council will offer to parishes, towns and neighbourhood planning forums, and those groups can use the SCI to ensure that they are receiving their appropriate level of support. In addition to this, the council now offers a paid-for service on neighbourhood planning to supplement the free support.

#### **Planning Applications**

The SCI policies are incorporated into the council's procedures and systems as standard. The council's complaints system can be used where any of the requirements are not met in a particular case.

## **Response from the Leader**

Questions 1a) and 2.

The communications strategy 2017-21 is a non-statutory document but is based on best practice, and recommendations from professional bodies, including the Local Government Association.

It is based on seven principles that require our publicity to be lawful, cost effective, objective, even handed and appropriate, to show regard for equality and diversity, and to be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

The principles of the code closely reflect our current and proposed practices. In particular value for money is a priority in all our work. As we continue to deliver communications we will do this within the law and with regard to the guidance contained within the Code of Recommended Practice.

The strategy is implemented through a combination of a proactive annual programme of activity and supporting Teignbridge Council's services with their communications as part of their role of providing a public service. It is monitored using a number of key data insights including Google Analytics, Site Improve, Social media insight, media coverage evaluation, external customer surveys and internal staff surveys which provide feedback about the service and areas for improvement.

We will be reviewing our communications strategy this year.

## **2) Member of Public**

### **Questions**

- 1) How will the local infrastructure (in terms of education, health, retail, leisure and transport) cope with the additional dwellings and if there is to be extra provisions put in place, would they come first (before the residential aspect)?*
- 2) What considerations have been put forward to compensate for the ever-increasing number of cars on the road - which will explode with NA3 - especially those using the Decoy area as a rat-run into and around the centre of town at peak times?*
- 3) What would make residents in the area not be anxious of this new development - what are the benefits and advantages to the development going ahead?*

## **3) Member of Public**

### **Questions**

*In anticipation of the upcoming Teignbridge council meeting I would like some questions to be raised regarding the NA3 development, specifically in terms of the carbon neutral policy.*

- 1) How will potential developers be held to account over public transport to town from the proposed NA3 site?*
- 2) The roads of Newton Abbot are already congested. If the NA3 plans go ahead how will this be addressed?*
- 3) Will any trees be planted/ new public green spaces/parks be created to replace what has been lost if NA3 goes ahead?*

## **Response to the 6 questions above from the Portfolio Holder for Planning**

The local infrastructure as described above is expected to be commensurate with the number of additional dwellings coming forward for NA3 as defined in the 2013-2033 Teignbridge Local Plan. The NA3 allocation is currently formed of 3 mixed-use development sites, which feature a link road leading towards the A381 Totnes Road to the west, with a junction with the Kingskerswell Road to the east.

While access to the development area adjoining East Ogwell will be from the Totnes Road and the development area adjoining Langford Bridge from the Kingskerswell Road, the central Wolborough site would require the formation of a section of the link road before any construction there could begin. The commencement and completion of the link road (which will be welcome in helping relieve local congestion) will be conditioned via the planning approval process or will be otherwise legally bound.

Schools (primary and secondary), public open spaces, communal facilities and retail outlets - alongside housing and additional employment areas - are all expected to feature within the allocations as a whole, however it is important to note that the proportion of each element is about to be revisited. Due to the legal requirement to review the Local Plan at its 5-year anniversary (and to accept the Government's

22.5% higher housing need calculation as required under NPPF legislation) existing allocation sites are now to be reviewed.

With some policies already well advanced to meet the requirements of development (such as the protection of endangered species and their habitats) and now with the added consideration of Newton Abbot's Garden Communities status, NA3 will be the first development allocation to go forward for review.

An invitation to take part in this process has just been issued to the Wolborough Residents Association and to local Town and Parish Councils. Through these organisations, members of the public will be able to help shape future development in their area on subject matters such as scale, quantum of housing and location. We look forward to working with these organisations and others over the plan review period in order that better-considered, well-designed and appropriate schemes can come about in Newton Abbot and the wider District.

One final point that should be noted is that both Planning Applications which have come forward to date which include the central Wolborough site have since been refused by Teignbridge District Council's Planning Committee - and are now subject to appeal proceedings.

If an Appeal Inspector was to uphold refusal, development and the link road would be thrown into doubt, with the possibility that new sites more remote from the many facilities Newton Abbot offers would over time become developed instead. Without further mitigation, such an outcome may have a negative impact on congestion and Teignbridge's carbon neutral policy aims.

#### **4) Member of Public**

##### **Question.**

- 1) The decision by PCL Planning this week to appeal a duplicate application for NA3 is a timely reminder to us all that planning officers face an antagonistic developer who will stop at nothing to place the interests of short-term profit above the long-term wellbeing of Newton Abbot and its residents.*

*Despite warm words from the new council leadership, I have yet to see any firm measures to counter the overdevelopment of our town, beyond a rather nebulous declaration of a climate emergency. If we can't save our own town, I think saving the planet might be a stretch. Will the council leader therefore please tell us how his declaration of a climate emergency translates into actionable measures to reduce or stop the NA3 and general overdevelopment of the town?*

##### **Response from the Leader**

The Declaration of a Climate Emergency was not made by the Council Leader alone but by a unanimous decision of the Council. Far from “nebulous” the progress and Framework for Action reported at this Full Council meeting, outline clear and ambitious actions. Most importantly we propose that an Officer be appointed to take forward our ambitious programme of actions. Next month, Executive will consider a report on the tightening up of our low carbon planning policies. We have developed a good working relationship with Towns, Parishes and the community via Action for Climate in Teignbridge. Many in our community have already risen to the challenge, initiated low carbon projects of their own and are offering their ongoing active help and support to enable us to reach our goal.

We have lobbied government (see Appendix B of the Carbon Progress report) and we must all continue to lobby government to provide the right policies and funding for us to reach the target. Our target of reaching carbon neutral by 2025 is ambitious but we are committed to play our part as a Council to match that challenge, and ask the rest of our community to also play their part.

Our journey to a carbon neutral District will require action from government, Council's, businesses, and individuals. If we are to reach our target it will require a fundamental shift in the way we live our lives, the way we heat our homes, generate our energy, how we travel, and of course the type of homes we build, and where we build them. Going forward we must build quality energy efficient low carbon homes in sustainable locations with good public transport links.

The task is much greater than a question of saving one set of fields versus building elsewhere. A concentration on this alone will not reduce our carbon emissions or make a fundamental change to the quality of life in the town. The nature of the challenge ahead demands that we collectively concentrate on saving our planet, and in doing so we will also “save our town”.

