

Matter 1

(A) Legal requirements and

(B) The spatial vision and the spatial
planning objectives (JCS parts 01 &
04, including the key diagram at p29)

Part A

Q 2

**EXAMINATION OF THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY for BROADLAND,
NORWICH & SOUTH NORFOLK**

**Matter 1
Item A-2**

**Matter 1 (A) Legal requirements and (B) The spatial vision and the
spatial planning objectives (JCS parts 01 & 04, including the key
diagram at p29)**

A Legal Requirements

A2 Does the evidence (including the Regulation 30(d) and 30(e) statements and the GNDP's self-assessment paper) show that the JCS has been prepared in compliance with the Councils' Statements of Community Involvement? No

The Councils' Statements of Community involvements are considered to be inadequate. The way in which Broadland District Council in particular set about this process was not very inclusive. Most of the process involved articles in the Council Newspaper and leaflets described as keeping you informed every step of the way. The production of this information does not constitute involvement with the community.

They established a Rackheath Programme Board, which held its first meeting on 30 March 2009.

According to these Terms of Reference¹, the Board would engage the Rackheath Community. In fact what happened was that the membership was limited only to those who were in support of the proposals, it was heavily loaded by Officers and it was treated as a non public meeting. In this sense it was not doing anything other than promoting the Council's vision. Of the original 15 members only six were representatives of the villages of Rackheath and Salhouse. Minutes of the four meetings in 2010 are now available on Broadland District Councils website². Requests for this information to be made public were at first refused on the grounds that these were not public meetings. Previous minutes and all agendas and appendices are missing. The Rackheath Programme Board pages are not even listed on the main page concerning the Rackheath Eco-Community but is hidden amongst housing and planning pages³ and is difficult to find as it can only be retrieved by searching the whole site and is not referred to under the planning policy pages to which it 'belongs'. As late as 10th November 2009, a council report noted how it would work with the promoter team and what an exciting and sustainable place this would be. In reality it had lost the confidence of members and had poor attendance. It is clear from the list of attendees that local involvement had not been achieved – for example on the 14th December 2009 the local vicar was the only representative from Rackheath, 2 people attended from Salhouse Parish Council and the rest were Broadland District Council's members (4) or officers (9) – most of whom are senior members of staff.

¹ Appendix 1 Rack heath Programme Board Terms of Reference

² Annex to Appendix 1 Meeting of the Programme Board 14.12.09

³ Other Minutes (http://www.broadland.gov.uk/housing_and_planning/3813.asp).

The purpose of Broadland District Council's attempts at consultation must also be questioned as in the Rackheath Programme Board minutes for 12 July 2010 their chief planner comments after being questioned about the considerable opposition to the eco-town locally that that "the District Council would be the decision makers and therefore, determine the planning application when it came forward."

Throughout this process, which is extensively covered in the Town and Country Planning Association guidance,⁴ the contribution of the developer to the process is described as central.

In practice this has not occurred. The developers plans, which were originally given banner headlines, remain sketchy, the ways in which the scheme will be put together is uncertain and attempts by our group to engage with Planning Aid was unsuccessful. It is not sufficient to ignore those who happen to dissent from plans which so many perceive ill thought out and autocratic.

This Joint Core Strategy fails to address these issues.

The change of the designation of the ECO-town to a Low Carbon development does not discharge the promoters from their duties of engagement.

A Rackheath Community Forum was proposed in April 2010 to replace the Programme Board but has yet to be established.

'Drop-in' sessions held in Rackheath to 'inform' local residents although much publicised in Broadland News initially were suspended due to "significant drop in attendees and it was not economically viable in terms of staffing to continue" (Minutes of Rackheath Programme Board 12 July 2010).

A conference entitled "Build a New Community" was hosted by Voluntary Norfolk on 30 March 2010 and speakers included Department of Communities and Local Government, Broadland District Council, Norfolk Rural Communities Council, Voluntary Norfolk, The Guild and Communitybuilders fund. Promulgation of this event was by use of flyers handed out in Norwich City Centre⁵, but Rackheath Parish Council and the residents of Rackheath or Salhouse were excluded from this process. Attendees included parish councils, churches and groups such as Women's Institute. In the event, members of Salhouse Parish Council did attend and report from that meeting is on the Councils website.⁶

⁴ Appendix 2 Extract from TCPA Advice to promoters and planners

⁵ Appendix 3 Leaflet issued in Norwich City Centre

⁶ Appendix 4 Report of Conference "Build a New Community"

TERMS OF REFERENCE
RACKHEATH PROGRAMME BOARD
Membership of the Programme Board

Cllr A Proctor: BDC Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy & Conservation
Cllr J Fisher BDC Portfolio Holder for Environmental Policy
Cllr C Green BDC Ward Member for Rackheath/Wroxham
Cllr B McGilvray BDC Ward member for Rackheath/Wroxham
Cllr J Cottingham BDC Member to champion Community Engagement
Cllr A Gunson NCC Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation
Cllr J Carswell NCC Divisional Representative
Chairman, Rackheath Parish Council
Vice-Chairman, Rackheath Parish Council
Mr R Cooper Chairman, Salhouse Parish Council
Mrs K Robbins Vice-Chairman, Salhouse Parish Council

Mr C McCormick representative of Salhouse community

Rev L Allies Community representative
Mr P Crick NCC Head of Strategy & Performance
Mr P Kirby BDC Strategic Director
In attendance:
Mr A Jarvis BDC Head of Environmental Services
Mr C Hill BDC Head of Business Support and Leisure
Mrs L Mowl BDC Head of Policy
Mr P Courtier BDC Head of Development Management & Conservation
Mr B Burgess Planning Projects Officer
Mrs S Flack Broadland Life Coordinator
Mrs K de Vries Broadland Community Partnership
Mr K Love Head of CNC

Overall Purpose:

- to monitor the progress of the Rackheath Eco-Community project

and

- to oversee a programme of discretionary projects linked to the Eco-Community development and designed to engage the Rackheath community in
 - consultation
 - acquiring new skills and knowledge
 - promoting community cohesion
 - enhancing the environment

What is required of members of the Programme Board:

- understand project plans and monitor progress, ensuring the Board meets its objectives
- understand and act on those factors that affect successful programme delivery
- broker relationships with stakeholders inside and outside the programme
- advise the Portfolio Holder
- be aware of the broader perspective and how it affects the programme

Specific responsibilities of the Programme Board:

- agreeing the Board's vision for the development and the project programme
- providing overall strategic direction for the programme
- managing the associated risks
- signing off the Programme Brief
- agreeing project plans
- monitoring any significant deviation(s) from the approved plans
- signing off completed stages/projects
- communicating information to the stakeholder groups
- taking account of information received from stakeholder groups and/or the community
- ensuring that the necessary resources are available
- resolving any conflicts escalated by the project team, the promoter/developer(s), the Parish Councils or the community
- approving project progress and completion reports

Rackheath Programme Board

Minutes of a meeting of the **Rackheath Programme Board** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Monday 14 December 2009** at **6.30pm** when there were present:

Mr A J Proctor – Chairman
BDC Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy & Conservation

Rev L Allies	Rackheath and Salhouse communities
Mr R Cooper	Salhouse Parish Council - Chairman
Mrs J Cottingham	BDC Member to champion community engagement
Mr J Fisher	BDC Portfolio Holder for Environmental Policy
Mr C Green	BDC Ward Member
Mr P Kirby	BDC Strategic Director & Chief Planner
Mr C McCormick	Salhouse community

Also in attendance were:

Mr B Burgess	BDC Planning Projects Officer
Mrs A Doy	BDC Communications Manager
Mr C Hill	BDC Head of Business Support & Leisure
Ms K Hughes	BDC Climate Change Officer
Mr A Jarvis	BDC Head of Environmental Services
Ms L Mowl	BDC Head of Policy
Mrs S Utting	BDC Committee Officer

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Crick (NCC), Phil Courtier (BDC) and Susan Flack (BDC).

45 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

Minute no: 39 – The Programme of Development (PoD)

Phil Kirby reported that he, along with Andy Jarvis and Simon Woodbridge (Council Leader), had made a presentation to the DCLG, following which he had been asked to provide additional information on two of the projects. He advised that the allocations would not now be made until after Christmas. However, the Council remained positive on being allocated a share of the £60m over two years. A point worth noting was that only the first year's allocation was committed, with the second year of funds needing

Parliamentary approval.

In response to questions on other authorities' bids, it was noted that Bicester were seeking £20m, Cornwall had bid in 3 phases - £30m, £70m and £100m and Whitehill and Bordon's bid was for approximately £35m. Phil Kirby advised that Bicester were unable to deliver the first stage of their programme, due to unresolved issues between the landowners. Conversely, Whitehill & Bordon's bid was the most advanced as their masterplan was currently out for consultation.

Minute no: 41 – Development of “Green” Businesses

Chris Hill reported on the business event which had recently taken place at the Broads House Hotel in Wroxham. Just over 40 businesses had been represented by approximately 50 attendees. The theme for the event was the results of the thermal imaging survey leading on to ideas for energy efficiency and development of the eco-community from a business perspective. The event had been well received and resulted in many enquiries about the benefits of the thermal imaging programme. Another business event had been organised for 10 February to be held at Sprowston Manor – the theme would be the implications for businesses of the eco-town and the business propositions.

In response to a question on whether a business representative could be appointed to this Board, Chris Hill advised that this could be discussed at the February event. The Chairman added that the operation of this Board was under review, following completion of the PoD and the membership was being reconsidered. Therefore, no further meetings had been scheduled for the immediate future. However, the importance of consulting and engaging the business community was recognised.

46 THE VISION - REFRESH

The Board reviewed the current vision statement for Rackheath and

RESOLVED

to agree the current vision, no amendments necessary.

47 PRESENTATION BY DAVID BANFIELD OF BARRATTS AND PAUL KNOWLES OF BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The Board received a presentation by David Banfield of Barratts and Paul Knowles of Building Partnerships.

Introductory Comments

Mr Banfield stated that the intention was to proceed with the preparation of the planning application as soon as the funding allocation was announced. A comment was made that the Council had so far taken the lead and was bearing the brunt of the public's concerns, therefore would the developers be making a follow-up presentation to the community? In response, Mr Banfield stated that the planning application would include a Statement of Community Involvement. The Council did lead on the public consultation which was the correct thing to do. Paul Knowles added that they had undertaken an initial piece of work and next year, they would be working with Sue Flack on the necessary community work. Mr Banfield also added that they were still meeting with the school and other groups to continue dialogue but there was not much more to add since last year. The DCLG had taken a significant amount of time to decide on the location of the eco-towns and the masterplan had not changed significantly since that time. The importance of the partnership approach between the developers and the Council was recognised and it was agreed that this should continue. Liz Mowl advised that the Council was developing a Community Engagement Protocol which would include minimum standards for consultation etc and would cover the whole growth area, not just Rackheath.

Background

Consultation had been undertaken within the GNDP and the deadline for comments on the Joint Core Strategy was 14 December 2009. The exemplar phase of the project would be delivered between 2010-2012 and phase 1 by 2012-2016.

Issues

The announcement had been made in July. Issues were:

- approximately 5,015 new homes;
- one secondary and two primary schools;
- 50% green space (including back gardens etc)
- building design;
- 30% affordable housing (minimum – as much as could be afforded)

would be provided)

- 50% modal shift – ie reduction in number or journeys to/from work by private car and use alternatives such as tram, trains etc.
- low carbon.

In response to a question of how certain the 50% reduction in modal shift could be achieved, Mr Banfield stated that this was already happening in other parts of the country. For example, there were dedicated bus lanes in parts of Kent which meant travel was twice as quick by bus as opposed to car. In addition, fares were a reasonable price and conversely, car parking charges were high which acted as a deterrent. Mr Knowles added that a 15% reduction was a major change in long-standing developments. The public were sceptical that significant reductions could be achieved. In Holland, the figure of 50% was achieved due to good quality services at a reasonable price. Unfortunately, there were no such examples in this country and therefore, people could not perceive what could be achieved. Another issue for Rackheath was the location of the employment sites, ensuring they were within walking / cycling distances from home. Consideration needed to be given to reviewing the masterplan by dotting the employment sites around, as opposed to one particular location. The site at Poundbury had various employment sites throughout – 16% of the population worked on site.

In response to a question on progress with Network Rail and the crossing problems, Mr Knowles stated that Network Rail had signed a service agreement regarding provision of a rail service, tracks etc which showed their commitment to providing a service. Two rail stations were identified on the masterplan – 1 rail and 1 tram train.

Regarding the provision of employment by local companies, Mr Banfield stated that the planning application would need to address this issue – 46% of the population of Rackheath travelled more than 10km to work, meaning 50% of the population did not work in Rackheath.

Exemplar Scheme

- 200 homes (approx)
- Homes to Code Level 4
- Water and Energy to Code Level 6
- Low carbon community
- Community retail

- Small office units

Mr Banfield explained that the exemplar scheme would comprise two planning applications as part of the submission. A map was displayed with various locations coloured pink, orange, blue and green. Blue identified the best location for the exemplar project, ie good links and was deliverable immediately. There was no minimum price and, as a result, land values were flexible. The PPS required the fabric of the dwellings to be a minimum of Code Level 4 but the majority of the exemplar scheme would be 4+ and approximately 10 would be Code Level 6. Mr Banfield explained the differential between the two levels with a simplistic example – with Code Level 4, a whole house could be heated with a 3 bar electric fire and with Code Level 6, a one bar electric fire.

Chris Green commented that public perception was that the whole scheme would be Code Level 6. He cited an example of a development in the locality involving Circle Anglia which would achieve Code Level 6. Code Level 4 was not yet in force and to construct a dwelling to Code Level 6 would cost approximately an additional £26,000 per unit. Mr Knowles responded that for large sites, there would be water and energy systems for the whole site, taking 2-3 years to deliver. Mr Banfield restated that the PPS standard was Code Level 4, ie well insulated, low carbon house. The Chairman commented that it was important to ensure that the public was aware of these facts. Phil Kirby responded that this was a difficult issue – the Circle Anglia scheme was purporting to be Code Level 6 and had significant public investment. However, one had to question whether it was worth an extra £0.5m to make Code Level 6, just for 12 units or alternatively, spend the money on something else. Regarding the exception site in Salhouse, should the public sector be investing that amount of money just to reach Code Level 6? The eco-community was within the private sector and consequently, there were issues of viability. Code Level 4 was being achieved with some parts of the development to Code Level 6. Therefore, the cost to the public sector would not be as great. By contrasting and comparing the two schemes, it was noted that the Circle Anglia scheme would involve significant public investment to provide homes at Code Level 6 which would look like traditional houses whilst the Salhouse scheme would look significantly different. Rackheath would have a mix of styles and approach. A “passive house” standard was a high level of energy efficiency, probably only Code Level 4 or 5 but better energy efficiency rating than a Code Level 6. Mr Banfield stated that the price difference between the codes would be known as part of the financial appraisal. In response to a question on whether buildings could evolve from a Level Code 4 up to a 6, Mr Banfield stated not without significant change as they were of a different construction. By 2016, all homes had to reach Code Level 6 but it was worth noting that Code Level 4 was so much more efficient than anything else achieved so far. Rackheath would have an energy centre on site to over-generate green power, eg biomass, for more than 200 homes. The Chairman commented that efficiency of buildings was key and a possible way forward would be a “stepping stone” approach with the adoption of a

“Rackheath code”. Mr Banfield added that there would be lots of standards to be incorporated and some would be at odds with each other. Phil Kirby commented that existing buildings needed to be improved as well. When asked if the £26,000 would diminish with economies of scale, Mr Banfield replied that “he hoped so”.

Regarding issues with Broadband, Ms Hughes stated that she would be meeting British Telecom the following week. Mr Banfield advised that an independent fibre network company would be providing the lines for the eco-town. Chris Hill added that Broadband was very important to the rural economy – the big cities throughout the UK already had fibre optic.

Community

- Community Trust
- Faith community
- Rackheath Primary School
- Local centre and farm shop
- Notre Dame High School
- City College, Norwich

Mr Knowles questioned what assets would be put into the Community Trust, eg allotments, adopted highways and advised that this would be the subject of consultation through to Spring 2010. Mr Banfield added that there was also the question of leaseholds – ie would the Community Trust keep the freehold? However, this led to issues regarding responsibility for maintenance etc. Part of the exemplar site would comprise a retail unit which could be a community led farm shop. There was also the issue of whether there should be a large food store; however these would compete with the smaller units.

Chris Green questioned the capacity of the Primary School, stating there were already insufficient spaces and so how would it cater for the exemplar site. Mr Knowles responded that there was single form entry, which stipulated the number of classes. Planning permission existed for a pre-school, which was currently operated from the village hall and this could possibly be brought in earlier. Discussions were ongoing with Norfolk County Council (as the LEA). Regarding capacity of existing health centres, Mr Knowles advised that discussions had taken place with the NHS and the providers at Hoveton. Mr Banfield added that health centres were commercial businesses – the developers would provide the building and then pass on. Experience showed that people wanted gradual expansion of existing facilities.

Mr Knowles advised that the wider community would be involved, particularly

in areas such as education. Eco-town issues would feature on the curriculum. Notre Dame was the link at Secondary School level, following on to City College. This would also be an education opportunity for builders, plumbers and carpenters to ensure compliance with Code Levels etc.

Landscape and Ecology

- Ecology surveys
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Working Group
- Town and Country Planning Association Eco-towns Bio-diversity worksheet

The land was currently in agricultural use and so there were few ecological issues.

Energy and Waste

- Energy and recycling meetings
- ESCO
- Growth triangle
- Zero waste to landfill – Government aspiration was for 25% of landfill by 2025 (currently 52%)

Constraints

- Heathland and tree belts – little ecological value so planned programme of replacement.
- Gas pipeline relocation – either on or off site.
- Norwich International Airport flight path – discussions had taken place on the impact of water attracting birds but the planes were too high to be a problem. However, controlled airspace was needed and had been applied for. Wind turbines had to be switched off from radar due to the flicker. Andy Jarvis advised that the Council was also working with NIA on noise footprint work.

In response to a question on the possible relocation / burying of the pipeline, Mr Knowles stated that National Grid said this was not necessary. Restrictions prevented building works on or within a certain distance of the pipe, even if it was buried deeper. One possible use would be as green space as there were certain, infrequent, uses which could be built, such as changing facilities.

Regarding archaeology constraints, none had been identified at this stage. If

any, these would be revealed at phases 4 and 5. The desk-top study highlighted little importance. In situations where archaeology was found, this was normally left in situ and the area used as green space.

Masterplan

- Outline planning permission by 2010.
- Barratt's Board commitment to exemplar and phase 1 – required for PoD.
- Affordable housing.
- Screening / S106 Agreements.

Government commitment was needed as well, in the form of public funding for the affordable housing etc. Any change in Government would see a change in grant funding delivery.

House Design

- Ongoing.
- External appearance.
- Hanham Hall, Bristol – previous experience.
50% want traditional design, 50% want something “different”
Level Code 6 means houses will automatically look different.

Dakenham

- Same landowner so part of Rackheath development employment provision.
- Small business units.
- BDC Planning Committee – February 2010.
- 80-85% carbon reduction.
- Construction will take 18 months to complete.

Partnership

Between BDC, Barratts, Building Partnership and Manor Farm, Rackheath

- Legal agreement
- Financial appraisals

- Joint project board
- Open book approach

Mr Banfield explained that land values would be provided to both the Council and the public as part of the planning application. There was a contractual obligation to develop an eco-town.

General Discussion

Chris Green questioned the website use and the engagement process. Mr Banfield responded that the website was continually updated and Mr Knowles added that during the consultation phases, information would be freely available.

In connection with ownership issues and the Community Trust, the Chairman asked if Barratts would adapt their business model from “build and sell” to build for rental from the developer? Mr Banfield responded that Barratts had huge bank debts which were serviced by selling houses at a profit. He questioned how the private rented sector could help the housing crisis. Barratts’ role was to build houses only and leave others to undertake the rental side. If the rental option was taken up, then this would need to be financed and he questioned by whom. Possibilities included the Government via tax breaks or more affordable housing grants. He added that a three year warranty was currently being investigated, as quality was an issue. Proven technology was needed.

Mr Knowles stated that the industry was not set up to do “rented” models, due to issues regarding tax, VAT etc which meant it was very complicated.

The Chairman commented that, in line with the spirit of the partnership, validity of information was important in order to counter the negativity and also keeping the Council up to date.

Low Carbon Communities

Ms Hughes advised the Board of a fund of £0.5m from the Department of Energy and Climate Change available for low carbon communities. This was completely separate from the DCLG funding. Reepham already had a Green Team in place and had made a bid under phase 1 of the scheme. Rackheath would be making a bid under phase 2. The bid was being written within the next week to meet the deadline. Rex Warner was the contact for the Reepham Green Team. Norfolk County Council was the leading authority on the phase 1 bid and Broadland would be for phase 2. The scheme relied on community support as they would be responsible for allocating any grant funding.

Any Other Business

Phil Kirby advised that once the announcement on the PoD bids was made, things would progress quickly. This Board had received a group structure, prepared by ATLAS, at a previous meeting together with topic groups. The reporting mechanism from each of the groups would necessitate frequent circulation of information, together with the outcome of PoD projects. However, this would not necessarily be at these meetings.

The Chairman endorsed the concerns raised on developing community engagement and the continued involvement with Barratts and Building Partnerships. He advised that the next edition of Broadland News (Spring 2010) would feature an appropriate article, together with publicity of the new website www.futureofbroadland.info

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

THE ROLE OF DEVELOPERS IN CONSULTATION

The Town and Country Planning Association produced an extensive volume of eco town worksheets which set out the processes which needed to be considered by Planners and Developers.

In describing this consultation process with residents it says

“ Eco Town developers will need to identify community groups in the local area, as recommended by the Eco-Towns Communities worksheet and should make contact with these groups where possible. Consultation will need to occur with proxies well in advance of new residents forming a new community. This could be supported by Planning Aid, through the Enquiry by design Process, through the Planning delivery grant process and through other agencies such as CABI.

Developers should commit to holding regular public meetings and to engaging with the community. The eco town designer and developer will need to consult with community support groups and representative organisations at a strategic level. This may be in the form of an access forum or by some other model considered to be effective.

An agenda of issues for discussion should be drawn up to provide a framework for consultation. These will typically include

- Where we live, our homes and our expectations
- Where we learn and work
- Where we socialise and engage in recreation
- How we travel
- Access to health at home and in the community
- Access to information and support

Addressing these issues across the anticipated spectrum of eco town residents, visitors and workers, in the context of a specific location will help to steer developers and designers towards a better understanding of expectations and how they might be met. Developers must ensure that the diversity of the community is represented and heard when consulting on these plans”

This process was endorsed by the last Government, who contributed to the work through the Department for Communities and Local Government and was published with a forward by the then housing minister Caroline Flint.

'Build A New Community' Conference – Help shape the future of Rackheath

MATTER 1 ITEM A-2
APPENDIX 3

Broadland District Council with Communities and Local Government

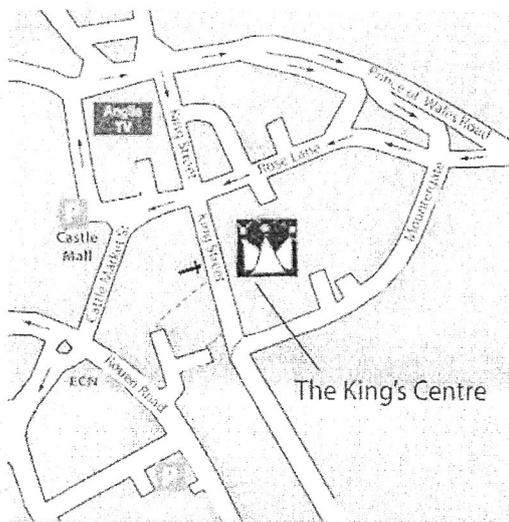
**Tuesday 30 March 2010
9.30am to 3.00pm
Lunch provided**

**The King's Centre,
King Street, Norwich,
NR1 1PH**

Places are free but limited, so book early to avoid disappointment

Please note that a £25.00 administration fee will be charged if you book and fail to attend

To book, please complete and return the booking form below.



What will the conference offer?

An insight into the unique opportunity for voluntary and community organisations to be involved in the building of a real community at the Rackheath Eco-Town.

Who is the conference for?

Voluntary and community organisations that work or would like to work, in Rackheath and who want to learn how to get involved.

APPENDIX 4

"Build a New Community" Conference

Hosted by Voluntary Norfolk
30th March 2010

Attended by: Kerry Robbins and Colin McCormick

Attendees: although we did not get an attendee list, it was obvious that many attendees were from Parish Councils, Churches and voluntary groups such as the WI.

The agenda included speakers from:

Department of Communities and Local Government,
Broadland District Council,
Norfolk Rural Communities Council,
Voluntary Norfolk,
'The Guild',
Communitybuilders Fund.

The CLG speaker re-stated the justification for the plans for development in NE Norwich:

- An estimated 28% increase in the number of households in Norwich by 2021
- 3 million new homes required nationally by 2020
- 1.7m people on the waiting list nationally
- 12,000 on the waiting list in Norwich in 2007, now estimated to be 16,000 in 2010

Gave a review of the policy for development of eco-towns (Public Planning Statement or PPS), the first four planned locations (including Rackheath) and the criteria for PPS in order to secure government funding. The second wave of eco-towns is now at the 'expression of interest' stage.

The criteria for PPS includes:

- Employment – 1 job opportunity per household within walking or cycling distance
- 40% green space of which 50% public accessible
- Energy efficiency to Code 4 minimum
- Each home maximum 10mins walk or 800m from public transport
- Services must be provided early on in the development
- Water supply is critical – consumption target is 80 litres per person per day
- "Community ownership of assets"

The BDC speaker was Phil Kirby, who referred to the Rackheath 'vision'. Mostly stuff we have heard many times before. However, he did appear to be slightly on the defensive over a couple of issues: the Growth Triangle (development will not be all over this area, but concentrated in 3 specific areas) and the allocation of housing distributed

between villages (the number of new houses per village would be unacceptable). This might be a sign that the pressure from SNUB is having some effect. When faced with the question about why they are proposing to build Rackheath to eco-Code 4 and not Code 6, Kirby's answer was a masterpiece of breath-taking obfuscation which left the audience less informed than before.

The **BDC, NRCC, Voluntary Norfolk and 'The Guild'** speakers all developed the theme of how the voluntary sector (the "3rd Sector") can help build communities in new towns and other developments. Key buzzwords or phrases often repeated were "delivering community services", "acquiring community assets", "community governance" and "community engagement". Much of this discussion involved the ideas of communities owning assets such as meeting halls and governing themselves through community councils.

However, when asked the direct question "where is the money coming from?", it became obvious that the Councils or developers were not intending to give any money, but that the voluntary groups would have to raise their own funds to do these things. ("God helps those who help themselves" seems to be the message here).

One possible answer to the above question came from the final speaker from **Communitybuilders Fund**. This is a fund which actively helps with serious cash investments (substantial 5-figure sums were mentioned as examples) for community projects, such as establishing facilities and services, and helping small community enterprises, such as shops, etc. In addition to cash loans and grants, there is also a lot of professional support and advice on offer. This, we felt, could be of interest in Salhouse, for example, if in the future we need to establish a community shop.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a lot of what was discussed we had heard before, possibly because we are already well informed about the eco-town and have already participated in a number of other forums. Much of the discussion about 'community building' seems to be a load of waffle, especially when it became clear there was no direct funding available. The Communitybuilders Fund was of great interest, however, and should be kept in mind for the future.

Colin McCormick
1st April 2010