

REPORT ON A MEETING OF THE PLANNING, ENVIRONMENTAL, AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE HELD AT 6:00PM ON TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012 IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, THORNE.

Present: Cllr. R. Durant (Chair)

Cllrs. K. Abell, C. Blackham, J.Blackham, S Durant, A. Farrand, M.Houlbrook, R. Powell and R. Walker.

2307. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Clerk reported that due to ill health the Chair and vice Chair had advised that they were not able to chair the meeting.

Resolved that the Mayor, Cllr Rachel Durant Chair the meeting

2308. APOLOGIES

The following apologies were declared:

Cllr. G. Derx – Work Commitment

2309. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Blackham and Cllr C Blackham – item 3 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interest)

Cllr R Walker – item 4

2310. DMBC SITES AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Clerk presented a report on the DMBC Sites and Policies Engagement Plan, and associated consultation process. The report identified the main areas within the proposals which would impact on Thorne and Moorends.

The following issues were discussed, based on the Chapter Headings within the Plan:

General

The Town Council is beginning the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, and is starting intensive consultation. The Town Councillors and the members of the local community have a much greater understanding of local circumstances and needs of the community.

There are concerns about the current consultation process. There has been little local publicity, the documentation is difficult to use and understand, especially for people who are not computer literate, and the timescale is short, with a substantial part falling over the main summer holiday period.

It is important that adequate consultation is undertaken for the next refinement so that there is proper engagement for a plan that will influence development activity for 17 years.

There is a wish to support appropriate development that allows for the growth and regeneration of Thorne and Moorends, and gives opportunities for local people.

Chapter 2: Overall Approach

The approach to countryside issues is supported.

The main concern for this chapter is the impact that flood risk is having on development. Whilst understanding the need for appropriate checks to be made,

there is local evidence that current arrangements are discouraging small scale developments which will be an important part of local regeneration. A local plan should be a proactive document that encourages suitable development, and further engagement with the Environment Agency to explore whether any burdens can be lifted would be helpful.

### Chapter 3: Employment, Town Centres and Transport

In terms of major employment sites site 1 is considered the most suitable as it is in the vicinity of existing warehousing/ business development, and relatively accessible from both Thorne and Moorends.

Sites 2 and 35 are open countryside sites which relate poorly to established developments.

The former Colliery site 38 is also suitable for industrial and commercial development. It is less accessible to the Motorway making it more suited to local employment.

In terms of local employment it is unclear why sites 53 and 54 should be considered for alternative uses. These are established sites alongside the access road referred to above and form part of the northern boundary of Moorends.

Some additional local employment sites should be made available.

The current wording of Policy SP10 excludes housing. It is clear that the regeneration of Thorne Town Centre will require an element of residential development, either as part of a mixed use development, or to encourage the concentration of retail activity. An example of this is the development of 42-44 King Street.

Whilst this is an allocations document it is disappointing that there is not a more proactive statement made regarding Thorne Town centre. The need for investment and development in the centre is the biggest issue in the town, and a positive statement that mixed use development will be actively encouraged would assist in the regeneration process.

### Chapter 4: Homes and Communities

In Thorne 2 town centre sites, Land Rear of King Street, and land rear of Market Place should be identified as part of the housing supply. These sites are being promoted by Strategic Housing at Doncaster MBC so their admission is odd. The total area of these sites is 1.29 hectares. Schemes have been prepared which would give a capacity of c 80 units on these sites.

Thorne's housing requirement can be met from the above sites, and sites that form a natural extension to the boundary of the town.

Cllrs J Blackham and C Blackham declared an interest in the next part of the report, and left the room taking no part in the discussions.

For Moorends there is a strong view that development to the east of the village (sites 439 and 462) should be resisted in preference to land to the west which is incorrectly marked as undevelopable. These sites form a more natural expansion to the community, and are better located for shops and other services. Proper master planning can allow appropriate recreation land and physical division between the 2 settlements, with, in addition, the electricity pylons inevitably requiring a development gap.

Part of the site to the south of Moorends (site 570) would also be suitable for development as far east as the existing Moorends settlement boundary.

There is no justification given for the omission of parts of Thorne and Moorends from Policy SP21. Development of small scale and underused pieces of land are important

in Thorne and Moorends as there are a number of suitable sites whose development would have a positive impact on the local community.

The proposals for Gypsies and Travellers in Policy SP 22 and noted. There should be a recognition of the contribution that Thorne and Moorends makes to the supply of sites, and that other areas should be considered for any future additional provision. Cllrs J Blackham and C Blackham returned to the room.

#### Chapter 5: Attractive, Safe and Healthy Places

Policy SP31 raises concerns as the listing of the buildings in Thorne Market Place is the biggest barrier to tackling the current eyesore. Whilst recognising the need to retain historic heritage it can have the unfortunate effect of creating a barrier to regeneration. Paragraph D partly recognises this, but could be extended to recognise the need for a comprehensive approach that creates broader benefits for an urban centre.

The boundary of the green wedge (SP37 - 1) needs to be considered in the context of the development proposals covered earlier in this document.

#### Chapter 6: Efficient Use of Resources

There was recognition of the need for the additional colliery spoil site identified in policy SP44 and are therefore happy with the proposal providing that it is appropriately managed and screened.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk prepare a response to DMBC based on the comments at this meeting for further consideration at the Council Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September.

#### 2311. THORNE CEMETERY

Councillors considered a report by the Clerk on Cemetery issues.

There have been a number of problems this year with Cemetery maintenance, partly caused by the bad weather earlier in the year.

The Cemetery is maintained by the Council in-house staff as follows:

- a. Cemetery Supervisor – principal responsibility is ensuring that proper arrangements are made for burials and cremations, and the amount of time available for general maintenance will be influenced by the number of funerals.
- b. Community Service prisoners – up to 2 community service prisoners assist with grass cutting etc. Whilst this provides additional resource by its very nature it is not consistent, and the quality is variable.
- c. Council Grounds maintenance staff – the other Council staff assist when necessary. However they are also responsible for the other Council sites and buildings and time available for the Cemetery will be limited.

A number of steps have been or are being taken to improve the situation including:

- a. Improvements to the entrance area and paths
- b. Management of trees
- c. Planting of flower beds by the allotments association
- d. Provide additional machinery
- e. Use of a skip in the allotments to allow removal of commercial bins, and of waste material from the Cemetery site

The maintenance of the older part of the Cemetery is labour intensive as the irregular placing of the graves prevents use of machinery. Delays in grass cutting also increases problems with grass getting onto grave plots.

Due to the nature of the Cemetery, a higher standard will only be achieved if additional staff resources were available. As a guide to cost, the current grounds staff cost c £15K pa including on costs. Part-time or summer only could be considered to reduce costs, though with the latter there would be the need to train and develop expertise each year.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk explores the appointment of a part-time apprentice to work in the Cemetery and report back to the Council.

#### 2312. CHRISTMAS EVENT - 2012

It is proposed to hold a Christmas Event at the Community Centre in Moorends on 8<sup>th</sup> December. Any Councillors are welcome to assist.

The potential of attracting grant aid to carry out some improvements to the centre prior to the event was discussed

RESOLVED: That the Clerk develop an Awards for all bid for improvements to the Moorends Community Centre in consultation with the Chair of Planning, Environmental, Amenities and Leisure Committee

**End of meeting.**