

Neighbourhood Plan groups online mtg with representatives of the Local Plan - December 9th 2020

Suzi Martineau attending this meeting on behalf of Walsham le Willows. Also present were Robert Hobbs, Paul Bryant, Tom Barker and about 15-16 representatives of Neighbourhood Plan groups ranging from those that already had made plans (Thurston) to those in a similar place to Walsham le Willows NP.

The presentation went through the 4 “Tests of Soundness and Legal Compliance” through which the Local Plan was receiving objections and amendments ahead of the 24th December 2020 deadline.

Questions and discussions were mainly about specific areas of detail with regards to parishes as represented in the Local Plan. Some of who were more or less happy with what was laid out in the Local Plan and some of whom were not.

Wildlife Corridor Data Request

About the availability of the Wildlife Corridors that are referenced in the Local Plan as being developed by Suffolk Biodiversity Services over the next 12 months. I requested that this information or some version of what they are thinking is made available to us, even in draft form, before 2022 so that we are able to develop our Neighbourhood Plan document in alignment with those corridors.

Coordinating land managers/grants, biodiversity and local action through Neighbourhood Plans

Others raised points about the lack of ambition on environment, education and supporting resilient communities in the Local Plan and the opportunities and needs of the times. We were told if we wanted to be more ambitious around caring for the environment, biodiversity or any grassroots driven requests to the county/district level we'd be pushing at an open door. They have so much strong lobbying from different sectors and many of the people working on the Local Plan got involved because they really care about local communities and landscapes. Therefore clear coherent requests from the Neighbourhood Plan groups would be very welcomed.

This might be more effective if we were able to work collaboratively with other Neighbourhood Plans and asked if there is already a way of Parish-based Neighbourhood Plans communicating and sharing best practice.

The response was favourable and Tom Barker asked me to follow up with an email to arrange a conversation outside the meeting. We have exchanged emails and are due to meet in January 2021.