

FENLAND DEVELOPMENT FORUM (FDF)

ACTION SCHEDULE FOR THE MEETING HELD ON 11 July 2018

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
1.	<p>Introductions and Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All in attendance introduced themselves. 			<p>John Maxey: - Chairman of the Development Forum</p> <p>Apologies were noted from: Julia Beeden, Dino Biagiono, Stephen Buddle, Ben Hornigold, Leigh Middleton, Graham Moore, Emma Nasta, David Wyatt</p> <p>Attendees: Geoff Beel, Ted Brand, Cllr Sam Clarke, Marcel Cooper, Nick Harding, Peter Humphrey, Shanna Jackson, Cllr Dee Laws, Cllr Alex Miscandlon, Daniel Morris, Carol Pilson, Martin Rayner, Adam Scott, Grahame Seaton, Nick Seaton, Cllr Will Sutton, Martin Williams, Christian Wilson</p>
	<p>Review of Action Schedule from previous meeting held on 18 April 2018</p>			<p>There were no comments or action points raised from the notes of the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Common reasons why applications are invalid</p>			<p>Nick Harding presented data showing that the number of planning applications valid upon initial receipt has dropped steadily since the early 2000s. The most common reasons for invalidity were simple, i.e. scale bars missing, incorrect fees, location plans either incorrect or not submitted etc. He recommended that agents double check applications before submitting to improve the number of applications that are right first time.</p> <p>The Chairman suggested that there can sometimes be a different level of rigor in the way that applications are examined and gave an example of his experience of this. NH agreed this should not have happened and asked for it to be raised with him should it happen again.</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
				<p>NH advised that a £20 fee is likely to be added to each application submitted through the planning portal. FDC could look at operating a planning portal-type service as electronic applications saves time and money. If there is a fee to use the portal, the likelihood is that no one will use it. It was generally agreed that most people are likely to use email as it will give them the saving, not the local authority. It was commented that using the portal would lead to more valid applications as there would be a checklist to follow. NH asked that if anyone comes across discrepancies in the way in which officers check applications, please let Emma Nasta know so she can provide officer training to ensure consistency.</p> <p>It was commented that a phone call would be simpler, cheaper and more helpful than sending out invalid letters. In response to a question about the use of USB sticks, NH advised that ICT would have to security check each one which would cause difficulty. In response to a suggestion that £20 be added to the planning fee, the Chairman pointed out that they may as well use the planning portal. NH advised that the charge is out of FDC's control.</p> <p>It was commented that there is a restriction on the size of the individual PDF files submitted through the planning portal, which is relatively small compared to the size of some of the documentation required for submission of a planning application. This means that the application does then have to be delivered by hand on a USB which then has to be checked. NH confirmed that he will feed this back.</p> <p>Nick Seaton advised the building control system is far easier to use and takes half the time. The Chairman suggested it may be worth approaching them to see if they want to be a portal for loading planning applications also.</p> <p>The Chairman summed up that the information provided by NH was very useful; the errors made on many planning applications are quite minor and something that everyone ought to be getting right.</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
3.	Forthcoming PAS peer review			<p>Nick Harding advised that FDC has invited the LGA and Planning Advisory Service to undertake a peer review of the planning service, which will run from 31st July to 2nd August. Members of the forum will be invited to participate and can raise any matter they like with the peer review team. A report of recommendations will be forwarded to FDC for consideration approximately one month later. NH stated that the planning team has already identified the issue of development viability, project management of larger cases, and recruitment and retention issues. The Chairman stated that all would welcome the opportunity to give their views.</p>
4.	Review of recent Government Planning Consultations			<p>Nick Harding advised that the Government recently undertook a consultation on the NPPF. He highlighted some of the key messages of the proposed changes.</p> <p>The key change is that of pre-start planning conditions. As of October 2018, FDC will not be allowed to put in pre-start conditions without the applicant's agreement. As part of that process, there is a 10-day consultation period and if the terms are not agreed, then the local authority can amend, remove, or make it a post-commencement condition. If none of these options would make the development acceptable, planning permission would be refused.</p> <p>The Chairman stated if there has to be a minimum 10% of affordable housing where the scheme has to be viable; one could envisage the situation in Fenland where affordable housing will have to be funded in ways other than directly via the developer contribution to achieve viability. FDC is not in a position to assist on S106-funded 10% affordable housing. He asked would it be acceptable to have the provision in such a situation that there was going to be affordable housing but with some outside funding? NH said he did not think a site that is not viable and meets what is required by the NPF would be allocated. Also, it does not appear to be saying that you could not make reductions in other areas of S106 in order to achieve that 10% requirement.</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
				<p>The Chairman asked when the new NPPF is likely to be implemented. Cllr Alex Miscandlon advised this would be October 2018.</p>
5.	<p>Development Viability: An agents perspective – John Maxey</p>			<p>The Chairman delivered a presentation regarding his perspective of development viability from a policy point of view. He stated that viability is part of planning policy not a departure from it, and explained his reasoning.</p> <p>A general discussion followed around affordable housing and economic viability.</p> <p>In response to a question whether FDC intends to develop their own social housing, Carol Pilson stated that there are no immediate plans but if a particular site came forward where there was an opportunity, then maybe as an isolated instance. NH advised that the Combined Authority has a significant pot of money that it wants to spend on increasing the delivery of affordable housing on what it terms stalled sites so if any of the forum members are willing to help in such circumstances this would be welcomed.</p> <p>The Chairman stated that whilst mortgages on 1 and 2 bedroom properties here are less than an affordable rent, there are those who cannot borrow for various reasons; with zero hours contracts being the biggest issue. He stated that the Mayor's Fund is the route to go and accept we cannot provide an economic model that requires developers to fund all the affordable housing. If developers work with the Mayor's fund, then there is a chance of some outside funding to provide the supply, whether it is on a wholly affordable site or as a proportion.</p> <p>Geoff Beel said the Council's policy regarding villages needs to be reconsidered. Development is not being allowed in the villages primarily because of flood risk. However, he would argue that infill development in the villages of small sites is a viable option. There are many sites identified which have not been approved by the Council for a variety of reasons, but he</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
				<p>feels these areas are defended to the highest standard of flood defence in the country so opportunities to allow development are being missed. He would therefore suggest that the local plan readdress the villages' options. There is an opportunity to link development, meet target numbers and be viable. NH noted the comment.</p>
6	<p>An agents experience of Broad Concept Plan Production – John Maxey</p>			<p>The Chairman delivered a presentation giving an agent's personal viewpoint of experience towards delivering a BCP and what he has learned. He stated that the working relationship between agents and councillors has been very productive and useful in terms of the BCPs that have been achieved.</p> <p>The Chairman invited questions or comments. NH commented that his question/challenge is that if FDC was to deliver the large numbers and remove the BCP as a concept, how can 300+ houses be delivered in a coordinated way if built piecemeal? He would welcome the ideas and views of the forum leading up to any local plan review. He would not want a policy that says a percentage of any sites over a certain size has to have self-build and believes there is already a healthy supply of self-build homes due to the number of villages within Fenland.</p> <p>In response to a comment that smaller sites of 1-4 houses are in great demand from self-builders or small developers but have been used up and now make a premium, NH stated that if subdividing a medium sized site into self-build plots, there needs to be provisions in place to control what happens on the individual plots.</p> <p>In response to a question asking what is the budget cost for producing a BCP, the Chairman stated those that have come about was through the goodwill of all involved, but in probability around £150,000 if they were being paid for. However, there has never been a full cost assessment.</p> <p>NH reiterated that if financial assistance is to be received from the combined authority or government for large allocation</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
				<p>approval, we only stand a chance if we have “oven-ready” schemes. Although a lot of money and work needs to be put in towards an outline application, which is a risk, the potential rewards in securing the funding towards infrastructure costs is immense.</p> <p>The Chairman suggested the implementation of a development corporation for Fenland that could not only find funding for infrastructure, but also attract funding from the Mayor’s Fund for affordable housing more easily than an individual developer. For this to happen, political assistance will be needed from within Fenland to take on the BCP areas, put in the infrastructure, and sell in parcels to local medium and smaller developers who care about the area, rather than larger developers from outside Fenland.</p>
7.	Performance, staffing changes etc.			<p>Nick Harding provided up to date figures on performance and reported on the top 4 reasons that extensions of time are requested.</p> <p>An update was also given on recent staffing changes.</p>
8.	Any other business			<p>It was raised that FDC had talked about bringing out its own guidance to Class Q. NH stated he could not comment on this as he was as he was quite removed from it, but would check with David Rowen.</p> <p>The Chairman requested proposals for items for the agenda for the next meeting, suggesting that ideally it should not be driven entirely from himself or the council.</p> <p>Planning for schools was suggested as an item for the next meeting. NH explained that this would involve County attending to identify their speculated capacity figures for primary and secondary education in Fenland, their plans for school expansion and to explain how they arrive at the figures.</p> <p>Cllr Sutton advised that the Chief Executive of Rentplus, an alternative to a registered housing provider, would be happy to</p>

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
				<p>give a presentation about who and what they are and what they have to offer. The Chairman agreed this would be a useful agenda item.</p> <p>A dedicated session on affordable housing was agreed for January.</p>
9.	<p>Future Meeting Dates:</p> <p>All meetings at 3.00pm in the Council Chamber</p>			17 October 2018 at 3pm

Finish: 16.49 pm