

## INFORMAL AGENTS MEETING

18<sup>TH</sup> September 2024

### MINUTES

#### Present

Helen Morris (chair)  
John Maxey  
Ben Hornigold  
Tim Slater  
Shaun Gayton  
Jordan Trundle  
Danial Wallage  
Paul White  
Shanna Jackson  
Hannah Wood Handy – (Planning Control Manager)  
Alex Fradley (Planning Policy manager)  
Claire Wiggs (Senior Ecologist)

#### 1. Apologies

Peter Gidney

#### 2. Minutes of previous Informal Agents Meeting

RR – Reminder to agents to check Application numbers when applying for Discharge of condition applications. Validation team will not double check application reference number with Agents.

JM – retiring and asked us to advertise vacancy on group.

HWH- Suggested that there should be standard agenda headings covering development Management, Policy, Planning support etc...

#### Claire Wiggs (Ecologist)

- Applications coming through now
- Market Unit price insight (water course units scarce) – report here: [Biodiversity Units UK – The BNG Report: Pricing & Key Insights - July 2024 \(biodiversity-units.uk\)](#)
- What is a Unit insight – FAQ document has been updated with a table to give an idea of what 1 Unit is equal to.

Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic Significance	Area (ha) resulting in one Unit	Example Habitat	
Low	Poor / N/A	Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy	0.500	Cereal crop, bracken, modified grassland, watercourse footprint, individual tree – rural, Woodland and forest – other coniferous woodland/ broadleaved/ mixed	
	Fairly Poor		0.334		
	Moderate		0.250		
	Fairly Good		0.200		
	Good		0.166		
Medium	Poor		0.250		Coastal lagoons, Heathland and shrub – hazel /willow scrub/ dunes with sea buckthorn (H2160), Pond (priority habitat), artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface, biodiverse green wall, SuDs, Wet woodland
	Fairly Poor		0.166		
	Moderate		0.125		
	Fairly Good		0.100		
	Good		0.083		
High	Poor	0.166	Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM, Lowland calcareous & dry acid grassland, Lowland heathland, Felled woodland, lowland beech and yew woodlands, native pine woodlands		
	Fairly Poor	0.111			
	Moderate	0.083			
	Fairly Good	0.06661			
	Good	0.0553			

- Appeals update (8 weeks to determine BGP; 6 months to appeal)
  - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-gain-plan-how-to-complete-your-appeal-form>
  - [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Council has invested in Software to monitor BNG (also links with CIL and S106 monitoring)
- Monitoring fees for BNG coming but not yet implemented
- Website updates (competent person for Small Sites Metric and FAQ document)
- Habitat Banks - responsible body legal agreement option now available to providers. RSK acting in our area.
- Self build (heads of terms) – heads of terms or condition will be required to confirm exemption
- Legal agreements required for significant onsite and offsite gain – PAS templates available from the government which should require minimal legal input. Ask Planning Officer for these if required. Examples of legal agreements and BNG clauses also provided publically on PAS website: [Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Blue line land - registration with Natural England is required and comes with a cost and must be secured legally. You may want to consider putting in red line boundary to avoid having to register it and if the gain is not significant then it will not need to be legally secured. Definition for on site significant BNG is on the gov website: [Make on-site biodiversity gains as a developer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Accurate baseline is essential
- Lots of errors in how trees are being dealt with by Users i.e. double counted, not recorded at all or recorded as retained with conflicts with arb reports in which they are removed

HWH – Confirmed that Heads of Terms where BNG is required to be secured by a legal agreement. Deemed condition will be dealt with via an informative. Such condition will need to be discharged via the usual form until further notice.

HM – Question can BNG be included within the blue line to offset BNG on an alternative site, i.e. Gaul Road, March (Suggested by JM). Also mentioned about how costly Ecologists are and with very few Ecologists available this is holding up planning applications being submitted.

#### NPPF

HM- New Government are consulting on revised NPPF - consultation is still open until 24<sup>th</sup> September.

A few changes were mentioned by HM that may affect Agents – i.e. Fee's, 5 Year Housing Supply, Green Belt (not relevant to Norfolk), Affordable housing. Helen will share all information to the group, RCA would likely share the NPPF consultation response on LinkedIn .

HWH- NPPF consultations also proposes increase in Planning fee's, National Scheme of Delegation.

Preapp fees may be increased. LPA has a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> October to discuss PAS tool kit.

#### Alex Fradley (Policy Manager)

- Local Plan examination hearing sessions have concluded.
- Main Modification consultation on the majority of the Local Plan is underway.
- There will be a further Main Modification Consultation on the Gypsy & Travellers & Travelling Showpeople element only in due course.
- Currently anticipated that the Local Plan will be adopted within this financial year.

#### Hannah Wood-Handy

Updated on new planners and structure.

#### New Graduate planners

Katy Collyer (part time Uni)

Tabitha Kaye (Part time Uni)

Tom Ellis-Danish

#### New Planner

Helena Su

#### New Structure

#### Majors Team

Hannah Wood Handy (line Manager)

Claire Dorgan

Keith Wilkinson

Lucy Smith

### Minors Team

Polly Harris Gorf (Line Manager)

Jade Calton

Connor Smalls

Clare Harpham

Kirsten Jeavons

Jody Haines

Helena Su

### Smallscale and Household Team

Natacha Osler (Line Manager)

Tabitha Kaye

Katy Collyer

Tom Ellis-Danish

Rebecca Bush

All contractors have now left.

This new structure will be reviewed in 6 months and any update, or changes will be communicated to all agents.

PAS toolkits sessions have been ongoing, and we have a new Project manager starting to help with the implementation of any changes needed to streamline the planning process.

TS- Asked how long PREAPPS take, HWH explained it depends on officer workload, but we are trying to speed up the process and going forward, the likelihood is that we will only offer in house consultations. Also depends on the quality of the submission.

HM- Asked about planning Officers areas are they still split into North and South.

HM- Each team will be split into areas with opportunity to process applications within the north and south of the Borough.

SG – Asked about planning fees for PREAPPS said we were cheaper VS other Authorities.

HWH - confirmed that once we have had the PAS training on 14<sup>th</sup> October the fees will be revised, and Agents will be updated with the new working arrangements once finalised.

RR- Updated on the validation team introducing the newest member of the team Laura Renshaw, Validation team are all up to date in registering planning application to hope this to continue. Asked for CIL forms to be submitted with applications.

RR- reminded agents to ensure that the correct exemption or BNG are being selected on the application forms. All exemption information is available on the Borough Councils website.

HWH- updated on mobile working and new monitoring system called Exaicom coming in within the new few months.

RR- Update on Discharge team newest member Emma Grimmer dealing with application in the south and Julie Belding continuing her work within the North. When emailing the disc team please do not email individual officers please use the generic email address.

Dates for next meeting

Formal Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Informal Meeting TBC March 2025