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**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP**

**Held on Tuesday, 11 February 2014 at 11.00 am in  
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris  
Mrs L.S. Turner

Mr M. A. Wassell (Chairman)

**Also Present**

Mr S.G. Bambridge  
Mr T R Carter  
Mr J.P. Cowen  
Mrs D.K.R. Irving  
Mr A.P. Joel

Mrs E. M. Jolly  
Mr K. Martin  
Mr M J Nairn  
Mrs J A North

**In Attendance**

Helen McAleer  
Phil Mileham  
Sarah Robertson

- Senior Committee Officer
- Deputy Planning Manager
- Planning Policy Officer (Capita for Breckland Council)

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**1/14 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

**2/14 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

The Deputy Planning Manager gave Members a brief update on the state of Neighbourhood Plans.

The Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan application had not made much progress since its launch in the Autumn of 2013. The Chairman of the Community Steering Group had been in contact to say that they were holding a meeting the following week, which the Deputy Planning Manager would attend, in the hope of moving things forward.

For information, Members were advised that an application for a Designated Neighbourhood Area had been received from Croxton Parish Council. That application had been publicised and was out for consultation until 19 February 2014. After that date the responses would be collated and recommendations would be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 1 April 2014.

There had been no other formal expressions of interest.

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**3/14 NON MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Councillors G Bambridge, T Carter, P Cowen, D Irving, A Joel, E Jolly, K Martin, M Nairn and J North were in attendance.

**4/14 NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BRECKS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

Councillor Kiddle-Morris presented the report which he said would build onto the existing landscape study which had been carried out in 2007. The new report concentrated mainly on the Brecks and extended beyond the District. It provided a more detailed and in-depth look at the different landscape areas.

The Planning Policy Officer then gave a brief summary of the Assessment which had been carried out by Shiels Flynn and funded partly by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils and partly by Heritage Lottery funding.

The Assessment covered the whole of the Brecks area as it was important to consider the landscape of neighbouring authorities as well as that within Breckland. The information was provided at a much lower scale than the previous study giving finer detail.

The two main aims were to provide a technical assessment which would provide guidelines for future planning and also to provide a narrative for the public explaining how the landscapes had developed.

The key part of the assessment was to determine what made the Brecks special and distinctive. Eight distinct character areas had been identified and these had been aligned so that the terminology was consistent throughout the district and neighbouring authorities.

The Deputy Planning Manager summed up by saying that the piece of work had only recently been published. It was a really useful study which could be built on and which would supplement Breckland's own Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) study, providing a solid foundation for future Policies.

Councillor Bambridge noted that Norfolk held 10% of the world's chalk streams, many of which were in Breckland. He hoped that they would form part of the landscape survey.

The Deputy Planning Manager advised that they had already been identified in the previous study as high value landscape areas.

Councillor Cowen thought it was very good that the study stretched outside the Council's boundaries. He was particularly concerned about the degradation of the Peddars Way landscape due to inappropriate use of the land in its vicinity. Those inappropriate uses had been refused planning permission and the refusals had been upheld on appeal, yet it seemed likely that the applicants had found a way to circumvent the refusals by using Prior Notification applications for agriculture uses. He said that the Council had no power to stop that and he thought that there should be a

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Policy to prevent the destruction of landscapes.

Councillor North agreed and at the Planning Committee meeting she had said that the Council was a guardian of the Peddars Way which was known nationally, not just locally.

The Chairman wondered how the document would be used to inform future planning applications. He asked if there would be a mechanism to make it easy to access the relevant information for a specific area. He also asked if it would be available electronically.

The Deputy Planning Manager advised that there were ways to use a Geographical Information System to understand which landscape character type schemes fell within and also to assist in the understanding of landscape types. He hoped it would be available in electronic format in future.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris quoted an example of a planning application in his own Ward which had intended to put a large building on a prominent landscape feature identified as a domed plateau in the LCA. Due to that classification the Planning Committee had been able to refuse that application on landscape grounds.

Councillor Carter thought it would be useful for a copy of the report to be given to each member of the Planning Committee.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris advised that they would need a copy of the 2007 LCA as well.

Councillor Cowen did not think that was sufficient. There was a lot of information and Members needed to understand what the results demonstrated and how they could use the information to determine planning applications. Training was essential for Members to help them understand the background and enable them to use the information to inform their decisions.

After some discussion it was agreed that the report should be presented to the Planning Committee for information and discussion in the first instance. It was further recognised that a series of training sessions should be arranged for Planning Committee members, which could be open to all Members to attend.

**PM**

**PM**

**RESOLVED** to accept the Norfolk and Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as evidence base to inform the preparation of the Local Plan.

The meeting closed at 10.25 am

CHAIRMAN