

September 2024 Priory Parish Council Report

Please find attached my report for September 2024 – this is somewhat longer than usual as there are a number of significant updates and some items for pure information. Should any of the items give rise to further questions please do not hesitate contact me.

As always if you believe I can be of help or assistance as your District Councillor please do get in touch.

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Sarah

Hindringham Specific

I write to further advise Hindringham Parish Council in regard to the letting of these new affordable homes, which are due to completion in the coming weeks, and would be grateful if this e mail could be shared with Councillors.

I last wrote with these details at the start of the project but given the time elapsed during the build, I thought it would be helpful to offer a reminder.

The Broadland Housing Association development is classed as an Exception Housing Site and therefore preference is given to households from the housing list with a local connection. This local connection is through current or former residence, employment and family. The local connection is to the host parish of the homes and the directly adjoining parishes. To confirm the adjoining parishes to Hindringham are Field Dalling, Gunthorpe, Thursford, Great Snoring, Walsingham, Wighton and Binham. All households from the parishes are treated equally.

There are currently 65 households on the housing list with a local connection and 53 of these have a close connection of Bands A to C. Please find attached a copy of the Local Allocation Agreement which provides details of the local connection criteria used in the allocation of the new homes.

I hope this is helpful and look forward to the completion of the development with households taking up occupation of their new home.

Highways

As some of you may know Steve White has retired as the County Highways engineer. The person taking over is: Christopher Purvis
christopher.purvis@norfolk.gov.uk

There are several items relating to planning in this report.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN - ELP

The response from the Inspector (David Reed) to the sessions back in February and March's exam visits has been received after delay since May due to the election purdah period. In his initial feedback response, he has suggested our planning policy team look at 4 areas for improvement before the ELP can be signed off as "sound and legal":-

1. Our methodology for calculating housing target numbers set by Government needs to support more homes (approx 77 per annum over a 15 year plan period) than the ELP currently provides.
2. Whether we can show we have enough houses to deliver in the next 5 years for the 5 yr land supply.
3. More relaxed provision for expanding some small growth villages than proposed by us in the draft ELP.
4. We need to update our housing assessments for traveller and gypsy by modernising our policies to comply with statutory requirements, rather niche but important to the Inspector.

In summary these considerations will take time and resource to work up detailed responses and given the timetable for committees and Full Council it is likely the ELP will not be adopted until early 2025. We had originally hoped to do it by late Autumn so it is disappointing. How new Government is thinking on the Plan process is anyone's guess right now.

Nutrient Neutrality

The 16 May launch of the Mitigation Fund to distribute £1.24 million to small, medium and single enterprises in the form of non repayable grants to replace septic tanks with more modern package treatment plants, as well as larger developers, has had a positive effect in starting to release previously stalled sites back in 2022. You will recall that DHLUC and Natural England stopped all new mainly domestic new building because of the threat to habitats of nitrate and phosphate pollution, better known as human waste, leeching into our watercourses. We are coming to the end of the first phase on 31 July advertising for suitable worthy applicants. Each application will be assessed by Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd representing planning authorities for NN, Breckland, Broadland and SN and Norwich councils. Every effort will be made to spread the awards across the county as evenly as possible, subject to identifiable demand.

Planning Service Improvement Plan – PSIP

Going to O & S in September will be a detailed summary of how far the PSIP launched in the Spring of last year has progressed. In particular the criteria to verify an application will be tightened so that applicants will have more advance warning of what reports are required for any given application, suggestions for improving personal engagement between officers and applicants, training for staff and member programmes, improved oversight and review of permitted development requirements on eco friendly development and review of our Constitution to speed up processes for example avoiding standard reporting clogging up the PPBH Working Party business. Our Constitution will need tweaking to accommodate changes.

Development Committee new ‘Call-In’ Procedure

A new online form is being created with guidance on the justification criteria for referrals either by the ward member or by a member of an adjoining ward if that ward is significantly impacted. In addition to home or neighbour members, either the Asst. Director, Russell Williams or the

Director for Place, Martyn Fulcher or The Chief Legal Officer, Cara Jordan will be the only persons allowed to refer items to the Committee.

This new process is to ensure all 'call-ins' follow the same process and that the reasons for the call-in are clear – and of course as has always been the case relate to 'Material Planning Considerations' only.

New Government Proposed Changes

Back in favour is the mandatory housing target of 350,000 (up 50,000 on the Tories) which previous Government changed from mandatory to aspirational.

Brownfield land and lower grade Green Belt land will be favourite for developing, we have very few of the former and no Green (or Grey) Belt but the AONB instead which isn't mentioned.

Compulsory purchase compensation rules will be revised to make compensation paid to landowners "fair but not excessive".

Planning committees will be modernised but details how are not given.

Capacity of planning authorities will be increased but no details how released.

Developments will be used to fund nature recovery (which with BioDiversity Net Gain is already occurring!)

Consent for major infrastructure will be simplified.

More powers will be granted to Mayors and combined authorities to create local growth plans.

New right to buy measures to enable local communities to buy valued community assets like pubs, shops and community spaces.

No mention of the proposal to legislate for the delivery of new towns mentioned in their manifesto.

Building Regulation Changes

The new licensing system to prove competence and be licenced and validated as a "Registered Building Inspector" has started with our department having 85% of its officers approved. This compares favourably with neighbouring authorities. We have a statutory duty to supervise staff who are not validated. All our staff will be signed up to continuous professional development as required. Latest legislation provides more enforcement powers for us which resulted recently in a major developer having to carry out fire safety regs remedial works at our request.

North Walsham Development Brief

A report was submitted to the Planning Policy Built Heritage Working Party and a full copy of the Brief prepared by Bidwells was attached to the agenda for the 18 July meeting for reference. Its necessary to adopt the Brief to scope out the Design Guide, technical documents and to process an outline application in the Autumn. It has been completed after input from the public, officers and site promoters. Updated to comply with the latest National Planning Policy Framework, simplified, shortened, more play areas, clarity on self build spread, better carbon reduction via design requirements, better maps and more Transport Hub information enabled the Brief to be recommended to Cabinet for acceptance.

Wells Neighbourhood Plan

The fifth neighbourhood plan to be adopted since 2019 was ratified by the PPBH Working Party following more than 50% of voters on the Wells electoral register voting in favour on 4 July. A Decision Statement will be published by 30 August to make it part of the statutory Local Development Plan and a material consideration for future planning applications in Wells. Authority to issue confirmation was determined for the Leader to make a delegated decision on behalf of Cabinet instead of Full Council.

Housing and Temporary Housing Update Report

Please find below an update from our housing team, which includes at the start further information about the challenges we face as an authority in providing temporary accommodation.

	Temporary Accommodation Net Costs				
	2019/20 20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/22 4
	£	£	£	£	£
Net Cost of Homelessness/TA Accommodation	197,808.31	443,083.91	390,320.89	835,909.00	860,894.00 net 1,3M Gross

The difference between Gross and Net is the subsidy that we can claim back from central government. This can only be of a maximum of 90 percent of local housing allowance from 2011.

Year	Total on overall housing list	Urgent Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer
31/03/2024	2549	623	1548	378
31/03/2023	2494	665	1478	351
31/03/2022	2550	667	1571	312

In relation to Waiting list figures the following provide a snap shot on the last day of each financial year:

31/03/2024 2549

31/03/2023 2494

31/03/2022 2550

What are we doing:

- 1) **Early Intervention: the team have been working with the local hostel within the districts to empower the support workers to encourage earlier engagement** in looking at wider solutions outside of social housing. Because of the lack of social / affordable rented homes, we don't want the main focus to be social housing but to encourage residents that they are able to resolve there housing crisis themselves, and we can provide them solutions on how they could do this, ie address former tenancy issues, start saving for deposits, look at employment prospects, its possible to work and claim UC this then opens the doors to more options within the limited private rented arena.
- 2) **Early Intervention: its about having the early conversations to help residents understand that there are options that they can consider. (as above)**
- 3) **When a customer presents due to Domestic Abuse the team will work with the customer and determine if 'target hardening' the property is an option to enable the survivor** the home, if this is then the team will work with the customer to enable works to be carried out.

- 4) Our teams work together holistically to support our residents. A good example of this is that our Help Hub will refer residents to our Benefits and Financial inclusion team to try and increase their income with appropriate benefits claims.
- 5) The Help Hub will also refer on to other departments, Statutory Agencies or Charities where other support can be potentially provided. Or case hold where needed.
- 6) Anyone can approach our Housing Options team in the first instance. They will look for local connection to North Norfolk to see if we can offer a place on the Housing List.
- 7) In cases where the home is not suitable for reduced mobility issues our Integrated Housing Adaptation Team will be contacted to see if additional equipment may help keeping that resident in their own home.

We are critically short of three, four and larger homes for bigger families. It is worth remembering that some (not all) larger families can be a result of Domestic Abuse. The perpetrator using pregnancies to keep a victim dependent.

The main causes of homelessness are that a private rental is ending. Either the landlord's mortgage has risen and either raises the rent to cover higher payments, leaves the market completely or converts the home to a holiday let which has less regulations than long term private tenancy.

Overcrowded friends and families can no longer afford or support another person in their home. Teenagers become adults and no longer share with younger family members of another gender.

Relationship break downs. Often one part of the family will stay in the home and the other needs accommodation.

We work with our registered housing providers, housing associations, developers, land owners and landlords to help increase numbers of available homes and also build new homes. To do this takes a tremendous amount of cooperation and partnership working. It also depends to a very large extent on Central Government funding. Without assurances of long term funding there can be little to no assurance of being able to continue to build affordable homes.

It is encouraging that the Deputy Prime minister has said there will be funding, however, we urgently need more details of this so we can plan for home to be built for local need.

What was missing from her speech was assistance with temporary accommodation costs while we plan and build more homes with future funding.

In many Councils up and down the Country over half their yearly budgets are now spent on nightly paid temporary accommodation. Some have therefore issued a 114 notice or are having to cut services which would normally be expected to be delivered. District and Borough Councils can only raise council tax by £5 a year. Remember that they are only allowed to keep (in our case) 8% of the total Council tax we collect. Any other money has to be raised from outside grants and fees and charges.

IN CASE YOU DID NOT RECEIVE DIRECTLY

Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm Extension Projects

I am writing with regards to the Sheringham Shoal Extension Project (SEP) and the Dudgeon Extension Project (DEP). As you may already know, on 17 April 2024, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero granted consent for the development of the projects as extensions to the operational Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farms, which currently power around 710,000 UK homes.

The development consent enables SEP and DEP to double the capacity of the existing wind farms, providing enough renewable energy to power an additional 785,000 UK homes. This will be achieved through the deployment of up to 53 new turbines. Together, Equinor's wind farms in Norfolk will power the equivalent of nearly 1.5 million households and make a significant contribution to the UK's decarbonisation goals. Our ambition remains to contribute towards the UK Government's target of 30GW of offshore wind capacity by 2030.

Through a coordinated approach and extensive consultations with local community members, Equinor has sought to develop the projects to maximise local benefits and minimise disruption. This is the first time in the UK that two offshore wind projects under separate ownership have been awarded consent under a shared application, providing an opportunity to combine the development of the two projects. This includes the projects' transmission cables sharing the same onshore cable route.

SEP and DEP's transmission cables will come ashore at Weybourne. The onshore cable corridor is an approximately 60km route that will connect to a new substation adjacent to National Grid's existing Norwich Main Substation just south of Norwich, close to Swainsthorpe.

Following development consent, there are a number of activities that the project is progressing in preparation for construction, and these are summarised below.

Increasing the projects' generation capacity

Equinor is now seeking to facilitate an increase to the projects' maximum generation capacity to align with the Transmission Entry Capacity of 950MW. To realise this increase in the maximum generating capacity achievable by the projects, the following changes to the projects' Development Consent Order are being sought:

- Increases to the maximum total wind turbine rotor-swept area for SEP and DEP.
- One additional offshore interlink cable connecting the offshore array areas.
- Corresponding increases to the maximum number of offshore cable crossings and cable protection.

This will be delivered within the existing Crown Estate leased areas of the seabed. The capacity increase will not change the maximum number of wind turbines, maximum rotor diameter or maximum blade tip height. There will also not be any amendments to the Order limits or onshore infrastructure proposals.

On 23 July 2024, we submitted a non-material change application (“NMC Application”) to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to seek the necessary amendments to the projects’ consent to enable this increase in the maximum generating capacity to be realised. As part of the application, we are consulting the relevant marine and coastal stakeholders.

A copy of the NMC Application and the Supplementary Environmental Report are available via the Planning Inspectorate's website at the below address:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010109/documents>

Surveys

Separately to the NMC Application and as part of our ongoing survey campaign, on 13 May we continued our archaeological investigations along the cable corridor route. Further surveys are planned, the purpose of which is to further assess the area and identify any necessary mitigation ahead of construction. We are communicating upcoming surveys to the community through the respective parish councils, and our Community Liaison Officer, Nigel Tompkins, is available to respond to any queries. His contact information is below:

Email: nigel@ni4b.co.uk