

Notes of Meeting on Farnham's Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14)

27 March 2015

Byworth Room, Farnham Town Council Offices

Present: Cllrs Cockburn, Blagden and Steel
Mark Matthew, Town Planning Manager, Thames Water
Ginny Gordon – FTC Officer

Cllr Cockburn introduced Cllrs Steel and Blagden and explained that all 3 Councillors were dual hatted (WBC & FTC Councillors) and they had been spear heading the Farnham Neighbourhood plan for 18 months – 2 years.

Previous consultations with other agencies such as Surrey Highways had been very helpful. The Planning Consultant, Tony Fullwood, had suggested inviting someone to look at the specific points as FTC needed to show that they had sought collecting as much information as possible.

The NP may have far more houses than currently in the plan – what flexibility is built to cope this?

Mark Matthew gave a brief outline of Thames Water:

Thames Water interacts with the National Planning Framework – water and waste water focusing on supply and sewage network, but mainly protecting the amenity ie odour/supplies/resources.

Big Developments can approach OFWAT to appoint someone else to undertake water and sewage such as S E Water. Can be a very complicated process with one network being operated by a different network. This makes planning for the future quite difficult. In most cases the sewage treatment ends up with Thames Water whatever network is used. The complications lie with the networks, but the government want more competition and think this is the best way.

Planning guidance helps to protect local residents by looking at the proposed plans early enough and see where there is significant growth and try to push for early engagement so that a framework of improvements and growth get put into the plans.

Thames Water does not have the ability to hold back developments, but can stall the progress until the necessary upgrades, and conditions are amended and accepted and there are clear plans to go ahead. Some constraints can hold back progress until it is known that the technology is proven. It is the statutory duty of Thames Water to meet the constraints set by the Environment Agency, but they should not set goals that are unreasonable or

technology that has not been previously tested. The way round this is to keep monitoring the growth and trial technology and if this is not viable, then to look at alternative sites.

The business plan for 5 year phases meets the water quality consents. Thames Water knows it has to upgrade and has a set of companies such as SKANSKA, to deliver the upgrades.

Farnham

Thames Water is comfortable with the head room of 20/25% at the moment. They have looked at the proposed housing and how much the head room will narrow. It is a balancing act but Thames Water will be fined if they fail. The 1,120 in the plan is deliverable and Thames Water is comfortable with the figures, but may need an upgrade in the future. The worst scenario of 3,400 will need an upgrade, but they are confident they can deliver the upgrades. The key bit is how well the sewage is treated, keeping down the ammonia levels. It is critical that the head room is comfortable as the load increases to keep the phosphorus and ammonia levels down.

Thames Water does not envisage needing any new sewage stations.

Odour

Residents think the sewage works are not working when there is an odour, but this is not the case. The treating of the sludge is an open process so there is always a slight odour. Thames Water does all that is reasonable to address these problems. Sludge is delivered from other areas, which does not help with the odour. Thames Water has highlighted the concerns and put in place a package of measures to deal with the sludge plant and inlet works where the problem is. Thames Water has to deliver the scope of work whatever the cost.

There have been talks for some time about centralizing the process and the need to build a new plant at Basingstoke.

Within the life of the NP the odour problem should be reduced, but odours will never be completely eradicated. Thames Water will concentrate on addressing the work to do in the next 5 years.

Network Sewers

A developer has an automatic right to connect the water system under the Water Industry Act. The connecting work can be checked by the adoption teams. Drainage strategy is expected to conform to conditions and Thames Water seeks fair and reasonable contribution of costs. Builders do try to stall and save money. Thames Water really relies on planning applications to give notice of applications which are in the pipeline. The planning application is needed for agreement to the connection being made. Agreement might also be needed for a pumping station to be put in depending on the network and how many houses are in the proposed planning application. The planning application

concentrates on the sewage issue, which could be a blockage in the system etc and has to be assessed. It is not necessarily the sewage system breaking down.

Local Network

Developers go to Thames Water to connect to the network and make sure the drainage strategy is sufficient. The Farnham Network might need some upgrading. Pumping stations need upgrading and problems and concerns about the capacity are alright at the present time. There is always a solution available in the network and Thames Water make sure problems are highlighted and addressed, but stress that the earlier that they are involved in the planning process the better the outcome.

The worst case scenario of 3,400 properties the network would cope with an upgrade to the network and pumping stations. Funding is about seeking a fair contribution from the developers with specific water calculation on how much to fund, with some from the developer and some from Thames Water. In a vast majority of cases, some developers try to just connect to the network, but early engagement avoids these problems.

Mark Matthew is to send over some strong words for the NP to make this a strong point in the plan.

Sustainable Drainage

Thames Water completely supports minimising the amount of sewage and re-use of water. The government has said that developers should look at sustainable drainage and it needs to be demonstrated. The type of sustainable drainage and how complete it is needs to be more than just a token gesture and should reduce the risk of flooding. Developers should be looking at large developments and demanding more effective sustainable drainage, highlighting flood risks and water scarcity of the south east. New developments should be re-using water with green roofs, rain butts, permeable paving, use less green spaces, but this is very expensive. Water going into sewage creates flooding.