

District Councillors Annual Report

Annual Town Meeting - 14 April 2022

Draft Local Plan Progress

There were around 600 separate comments on the Plan many of which have made multiple comments in relation to several different policy areas. Unfortunately, less than half the respondents used the consultation portal so there is now a significant exercise in recording and sorting all of the representations into an understandable representation of what has been said. Officers think this initial sorting process will take a further two/three weeks at which point all comments made will be published and be viewable on the consultation portal.

Following this, a report to the Local Plan Working Party will be made to agree the scope for further amendment to the consultation. This may have the potential to require preparation of further evidence, including for example, to consider the off-site highway impacts of growth at North Walsham. A 'fair wind' might see us get to submission by September 22. Should the Plan be submitted around September it is not unusual for the actual examination process to take up to a year although the new Plan can start to be used for some decisions during this period.

However, Natural England have raised national concerns about Nutrient Neutrality and its relation to housing development. This has currently resulted in a suspension of granting many planning permissions across England. Until a solution is found, this unforeseen event has the potential to cause delays

The Reef

In an era when many Councils have been deferring capital projects, NNDC is proud to have delivered this environmentally friendly new state of the art swimming pool and sports facility to the District. Despite the rising costs of materials and problems associated with multiple covid lock downs, the project has been completed and is now in use. The first few months have seen a fantastic take up by North Norfolk residents.

Mammoth Marathon

The Council is keen to promote health and fitness in the district and after two years of covid delays, has scheduled the first mammoth Marathon event. Named to reflect the historic nature of our region and the Deep History Coast attraction, the event is scheduled for May 15th. Registrations are now closed.

Covid Support

The Council has distributed over £126m in Covid-related business grants, supporting businesses across the whole district. It has subsequently received awards for getting the money out quickly to where it was needed.

The Council were pleased to support the covid testing stations at its Vicarage Street car park 3 times per week throughout the pandemic. The council also hired a dozen Covid Support Marshals who worked throughout the district supporting businesses to reopen after each lock down in order to keep residents as safe as possible. Their efforts contributed to the district having some of the lowest infection rates recorded in the country through much of the lock downs.

Heritage Action Zone

Your local Councillors and the NNDC Administration was pleased to secure £3M of funding to support a project designed to enhance and regenerate the historic North Walsham Town Centre. This once in a generation investment in the town is hoped to make the town a place that others will come to visit whilst making residents proud of its heritage.

The project has 3 strands. Capital projects to improve the fabric of the town, refurbishing and renovating historic buildings and an arts and culture programme of events and activities.

Work has begun at the Church approach to create a vibrant new area and at Cedar House where a full refurbishment is taking place to secure the long term future of this historic building. Other works around the town centre will follow.

To facilitate these works part of the Vicarage Rd car park has been secured as a construction camp for our contractors. To compensate for this loss of car parking, free car parking has been provided at the Hornbeam Rd site next to Screwfix.

New Bus Terminus Plans

In order to reduce pollution and congestion in the town, it has been proposed to convert part of the New Rd car park into a bus terminus. Pedestrian access will be unaffected, and some parking retained. NNDC are working in partnership with NCC on this project.

General

NNDC were delighted to support the funding of the new skate park with a £25K grant and by assisting construction with parking provision. The skate park is a much-improved facility, it is pleasing that it is already being well used. Many thanks go to NW play and TC for their efforts to secure remaining funding.

Funding has been approved for a refurbishment of the New Road public toilets. The designs are currently being drawn up and they will include a changing places facility.

Local Councillors have been working with NWFC to secure a new long-term lease for the club that will help to secure its future and open doors for other funding

opportunities. We have also been working with the FA to bring a new state of the art 3G pitch to Green Rd.

Established a drainage ditch maintenance programme for Lynfield Estate. This ditch takes most of the run-off water from the estate and is part of wider plans to reduce the impact of extreme rainfall events. The first Council sponsored clean out taken place in November 2021.

It has been good to see that businesses continue to take up new industrial units on the Hornbeam estate. This incoming investment demonstrates growing confidence in our town whilst creating much needed new jobs.

The Laundry Loke development is now complete. It provides much needed affordable housing for the town and removes a long term eye-saw. The draft local plan has allocated a significant amount of new land for employment to compensate for the loss of this land.

Local members are delighted that the planning application for a proposed builders merchant at the Davenport Magic Kingdom site has now been approved. A solution to long standing drainage issues on this former Crane's site has been engineered that satisfies all consultees. It is hoped that the development will bring new much needed employment opportunities to North Walsham whilst also doing much to eliminate a visual blight on one of the key arteries into the town.

Climate Change

The Council has planted nearly 72000 trees as part of its tree for every resident project. It was great that both the TC and NWHS supported this project by planting the free trees supplied by the Council. An innovative Miyawaki forest was planted on the Acorn Rd park, a huge thank you to the many members of the public who came out to help with that project. We continue to urge landowners and residents to come forward if they know of further planting opportunities in the town.

NNDC is actively working to reduce its own carbon foot print which has seen over 1000 tonnes of carbon pa eliminated as a result of its activities. A promise to our residents on climate change is evidenced by Norfolk's first Environmental Charter and our Net Zero Action Plan and Strategy – both of which can be accessed from the front page of the NNDC website.

To support the Governments predictions of huge growth in electric car users in the next few years, NNDC was pleased to install 6 charging points at its Bank Loke car park. NNDC has installed more EVCP's than any other Council in Norfolk.

On Behalf of North Walsham District - Cllrs Lloyd, Seward, Birch, Henrich and Gay