

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

An overview of the Committee's activities shows that the flow of planning applications has been more robust than this time last year and that a lot of thought and time has been put into various consultations. Our policy is that it is our duty to reply on the Town's behalf if it is likely to have a material impact on the town – no comment, no right to complain.

Firstly, I would like to thank the members of the Committee for their positive part they have played in the effective operation of the Committee, and in particular Jo Stannard and Claire Perrens for their support, advice and the effective use of the electronic delivery of planning documents. It works most of the time, subject to poor quality (presentation and completeness) of some of the applications.

To put our role into context we have considered:

- New Forest District Council – 193 No applications;
- New Forest National Park – 47 No applications;
- Overall they included: 34 No Tree Preservation Order works, 6 No Conservatories and surprisingly 74 No accommodation units, including 24 No at Eastfield Lane.

A major area of our activity has been either replying to consultations or being part of various working parties:

- Southampton Road Environmental Improvements – slow progress, but a start this autumn;
- Town Access Plan – slow but sure progress;
- Ringwood Signage Project – a very long standing project slowly coming to fruition;
- Informal Traffic Management Liaison Meeting – another long standing group trying to find least harmful ways of managing traffic and parking in our Town;
- Ringwood School Student Parking – a resolution looks in sight;
- NFDC – Sites and Development Management Plan Document – future housing sites;
- A31 Improvements – Highways Agency – a saga that is still running that will have a material impact on the Town;

We also commented, in particular, on two NFNPA documents:

- Western Escarpment (west of the A31) Conservation Area Management – off and now possibly on now that staffing issues have been resolved;
- Local Development Framework – Cores Strategy and Development Management Policies – we expressed concern about new housing and employment opportunities.

The committee had two training events presented by NFDC officers:

- The Licensing Act 2003 – operation and valid objections, the latter is important, as the grounds are very specific;
- Local Development Framework and core documents – the framework for future planning considerations.

Concluding, I attended in June 2009 the Examination in Public of NFDC's Local Development Framework at Lymington for the first two days – an exemplar of a planning enquiry, exacting, focused and well managed, even if some of the assumptions I would question. And earlier on this year I attended again at Lymington the Public Enquiry into the application to build 24 units off Eastfield Lane, which was dismissed. Once again I was impressed by the quality of the enquiry if not the outcome.

Lastly, your Committee will continue to serve individual applicants and the larger community to the best of our collective ability – it is a balancing act between individual benefits and that which benefits the community as a whole.

Nigel Clarke,
Chairman, Planning, Town & Environment Committee.