

Planning Sub-Group Update Report – April 2024

Responses in the last six months have mainly concerned badly placed public open space, or not enough it, and poor sustainable transport connections. Rights of way are regularly built over or subsumed into estate roads in spite of guidance to the contrary from North Yorkshire Council's (NYC) rights of way team. Their own responses to rights of way issues focus on obstruction and surface of the public path, and never take account of the tricky (but important) unquantifiable matter of amenity value and the 'entitlement of enjoyment' which is embodied in the Highways Act 1980, sec 130....

What has emerged is the difference that the previous 7 district councils (which still handle the day today decisions) have when one could assume that it is standard. Even application forms are differently set out, and the way the applications are publically advertised have different titles. Sorting through a weekly list is a time-consuming task, and it should be possible for these lists to be filtered at source by a less-qualified support team, because planning offices are meant to check if there is a prow in or adjacent to a site. Done diligently this would also be a massive time-save to county hall, currently obliged to trawl through scores of applications for the few that matter.

Also surprising are the number of housing developments which ignore minimum standards for parking, (set by County Hall) and then not amended by the case officer. The Forum grumbles about this because of the knock-on effect ad hoc parking on estate roads has on the attractiveness and safety of cycling, and where cars are parked half on pavements this is a problem for those with pushchairs, wheelchairs, and those with poor sight. It is the job of the area highway engineers to vet site design, and I suggest their mind-set is geared towards the technical side of their job, and car-parking allocation is a peripheral issue. Interestingly enough, Hambleton does not regard a standard-size garage on a plan as a garage because they are routinely used as storage space and expects a dwelling to have car-space on its curtilage in addition. Oxfordshire have changed the size of its standard garage and parking spaces to cater for the larger cars, so different authorities have varying approaches on this. Is North Yorkshire sensitive to changing demographics and lifestyle? Time for a fresh look?

Conclusion: In an effort to streamline planning within the new NYC, would a tick-box system simplify planning? For access for instance: Is there play space within the site and overlooked? Is the site big enough to warrant public open space as well (ie not play equipped) for social interaction and rest? Are there prows in or near the site? Are there good cycle/walking links within and beyond the site? On the highway side: Have the parking standards been met? Are dropped curbs built in as a matter of course? There may be other access-related basics.

Just thoughts for discussion, in addition to how the forum can get pre-filtered consultations so we don't need to comment when planners have not done their job.

The Forum, has used Rachel as the lead on planning matters and other members have stepped forward and are helping provide responses, guided by Rachel. This ensures that the forum doesn't just rely on one person and hopefully share the responsibility.

It would also be helpful to have an update from Trevor Watson, Head of Planning, as to what progress is being made within the department and whether our previous report has helped with the transition.