

WEEK 1 MATTER I

Duty to Cooperate

24. Local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.
25. Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans. They should also engage with their local communities and relevant bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, the Marine Management Organisation, county councils, infrastructure providers, elected Mayors and combined authorities (in cases where Mayors or combined authorities do not have plan-making powers).
26. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere.
27. In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policymaking authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance, and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency.

Cross boundary/border cooperation specifically about highways issues has been extremely difficult. NNDC acknowledge that their plans to develop North Walsham will impact the communities of Coltishall and Horstead. To my knowledge there have been two failed attempts to address this issue. The first Technical Note produced by WSP underwent several revisions and was eventually scrapped. AECOM have since produced a Traffic Impact Assessment which does nothing to mitigate the effects of dramatically increased traffic volumes as a result of the proposed development but merely considers ways to increase flow by removing parking and widening a junction in the high street. No consideration has been given to other issues e.g. air quality. In the case of the WSP Technical Note a Freedom of Information Request was required to acquire copies of all the versions. NNDC did not respond within the required time scale and the matter was referred to the Information Commissioners Office. In the event the technical note was scrapped. Another Freedom of information request was submitted to NNDC asking for any and all copies of correspondence which would evidence cross border cooperation with Broadland District Council on this issue. Once again NNDC failed to respond within the required time scale. This matter was subsequently raised at NNDC full council meeting where the portfolio holder for

planning/development apologised for failing to comply. To date I still have no cogent reply to my request. However, 48 hours before the above meeting, I received a collection of emails and irrelevant images from Mark Ashwell, Planning Policy Manager at NNDC, along with an apology for not responding to my FOI request sooner. It is important to note that the dates of the emails start in August 2023 and talk about future cooperation. This would suggest that the required cooperation between NNDC and BDC only began well after the initial planning stages when, under the terms of the NPPF, this issue should have been addressed. It is clear that NNDC did not appreciate the wider consequences of their plans on the communities along the B1150 corridor between North Walsham and Norwich. Our local Councillor highlighted this issue in her own article to the media, as you can see she has also not enjoyed any more success than I did:

Broadland District Council made representations in response to North Norfolk's Local Plan back in 2021, and within that response the Council identified that significant additional growth in North Walsham would significantly increase traffic volume on the arterial routes to Norwich particularly the B1150.

Following this, North Norfolk DC undertook a transport assessment in Summer 2021 which would address any potential impact on the road, despite repeated requests to share the findings of the assessment, no information was forthcoming. Eventually a 'Technical Note', which was of limited scope was provided the day before North Norfolk began the Regulation 19 publication of their Local Plan.

Although there was an opportunity to discuss and potentially resolve local concerns about the transport impacts of planned growth of North Walsham, on residents of Coltishall, the opportunity to resolve this important cross border matter was missed, and local people did not get their say.

At a second meeting with NNDC last Summer, following objections to the local plan on the adequacy of the transport evidence prepared, the County Council told NNDC additional transport work was required.

The promoter of the proposed housing sites at North Walsham engaged Consultants 'Aecom' to undertake a subsequent Transport Assessment, and our newly formed Coltishall & Horstead B1150 Group submitted our 'local points of concern' which need to be addressed by Aecom, before the traffic counts began last Autumn.

Extracts from the long-awaited Transport Assessment for Coltishall by Consultants 'Aecom' were finally published in North Norfolk District Councils papers for the 'Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party' meeting on 7th August, and on the same day as County Council organised a virtual meeting at

short notice with Myself and Cllr. Fran Whymark to discuss the recommendations from Aecom.

Notwithstanding our many 'points of concern', Aecom have only concentrated on increasing traffic flow through the villages as development in North Walsham starts. Their two recommendations for traffic 'Mitigation in Coltishall' are firstly, to remove 'obstructive parking' in the high street adjacent the War Memorial to allow a 'bus stop cage in place of parking'. Secondly, to improve the junction of Norwich Road and Wroxham Road to create a right turn lane onto the B1354, when heading north from Horstead direction. There are no mitigation measures to protect pedestrians and cyclists, nor have they addressed our main concern, the width constraint over the River Bure Bridge. North Walsham is already the largest town with 13,000 plus residents since the last census. The former RAF Base north of Coltishall is now home to HMP Bure, a main employer and the Scottow Enterprise Park in North Norfolk is operating at capacity. When further planned development in North Walsham of circa 2000 new homes comes forward, without any meaningful funding to improve the road infrastructure and River Bridge in Coltishall, traffic chaos will be exacerbated.

NNDC said a Public Consultation on the Development Brief would take place at the end of August for six weeks, and despite many requests for details of the consultation, nothing is forthcoming nor a copy of the Transport Assessment, despite an FOI request. Do NNDC and the Promotors of Development Land at North Walsham really think that if they do not respond to requests for information and 'Kick the problem down the road' enough it will disappear? I think NOT.

Cllr. Jo Coppstone, Chair of Coltishall & Horstead 'B1150 Group'.

This lack of cooperation and reluctance to share information does not, in my view, align with the requirement of the NPPF. I submit that the whole issue of cross border cooperation in relation to highways is completely unsatisfactory. I urge the inspector to rule that this issue be revisited by an independent traffic consultancy, NNDC and BDC and this time all the facts are laid before all parties so that a genuine statement of common ground can be produced and consulted on publicly thereby providing real transparency as required by the NPPF.

Bill Musson

B1150 Special Interest Group Member & Coltishall Resident