



Garstang Town Council

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Planning Committee Meeting, 16th September 2024 Minutes

Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting, held on 16 September 2024,
7.15pm.

Present

Chairman; Councillor Webster

Councillors present: Allan, Allard, Forshaw, Keyes, Perkins and Webster.

Also present: Town Clerk, Edwina Parry and Councillor Atkinson.

020(2024-25) Apologies for Absence

None.

021(2024-25) Declaration of Interests and Dispensations

(2024-25) Councillor Forshaw declared an 'other interest.' She worked in the building of the application number 24/00595/FUL. She did not take part in the discussion or voting.

022(2024-25) Public Participation

No members of the public wished to speak.

023(2024-25) Minutes of the last meeting

A copy of the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 19th August 2024 had been circulated.

Resolved: The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 19th August 2024 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

024(2024-25) Wyre Council Application

a) Application Number: 24/00595/FUL

Proposal: Change of use from private medical practice to residential apartments

Location: 14-16 High Street Garstang

Resolved: No objections

(Councillor Allard arrived during this item).

025(2024-25) SLCC guidance - Biodiversity Net Gain

The Committee noted the advisory information, detailed in the Appendix, relating to, an emerging perspective on local council's response to planning applications.

The Acts' broad principle is to enhance biodiversity to require 10% of an application site, submitted after 12/02/24, to be for biodiversity purposes (with restrictions and conditions).

The Meeting Finished at: 7.20pm

Appendix

Background

The Environment Act 2021 incorporated a broad principle of enhancing biodiversity. Proposals for biodiversity net gain of at least 10% on existing site levels in England are now required as part of the following:

- Generally, any planning applications for a single dwelling or more (but not housing extensions), submitted since 12th February 2024
- Commercial development of more than 1,000 square metres or 1 hectare
- Minerals or waste related development
- Nationally significant infrastructure projects (thresholds are defined under Sections 15-30A of the Planning Act 2008) – but not yet, date to be confirmed.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has published a [statutory biodiversity metric](#) for calculating biodiversity value, as a baseline for a 10% increase.

Points to check in planning applications

Further to [Government guidance for planning authorities](#) the following points in a developer's application may be looked for:

Planning application detail	Potential response
Confirmation that biodiversity net gain is applicable.	If not, why not? See definitions above
Calculation of the biodiversity value of the site	Have they missed anything - including saying there is none? NB If unauthorised degradation has taken place, calculations can be based on a previous value as far back as January 30th 2020.
Description of any irreplaceable habitat	Is there really no alternative to destroying a habitat?
A habitat plan of the whole site	Is it accurate? See considerations below.
To what extent the net gains are to be provided on-site and off-site	It will be important for local councils to take a view on these points, as developers may be asking to buy "statutory biodiversity credits" rather than enhance local biodiversity.
A draft habitat management plan for on-site biodiversity	
Plan for any off-site biodiversity gain	

There will also be a biodiversity net gain plan (the Government template for which is not mandatory), but this is usually only agreed AFTER planning permission has been given, and local councils are not asked to be involved in those discussions. It will be appropriate therefore to make any comments on that plan as soon as the planning application comes in.

The agreed and signed plan is intended to be enforceable by the planning authority for 30 years, so some points to review:

- If the plan includes a biodiversity credit for an area outside the planning authority's jurisdiction, that may make future monitoring difficult.
- If the plan includes biodiversity net gain within the gardens of new houses, that may prove difficult to enforce on future householders.
- The potential for using the same off-site location for biodiversity net gain for more than one development should be prevented by a planned national database of such locations.

Considerations

Local councils may like to consider:

- contacting local wildlife or conservation groups for their advice
- identifying local experts in either habitats or locations
- noting areas outside development sites that might benefit from enhancement, to potentially add to the local planning authority's credit list.
- building up over time a biodiversity map of the council area, adding in the details discovered for each development proposal. including such site information in a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- See also guidance on responding to planning applications and a model biodiversity policy at www.slcc.co.uk/climate-action/