

Minutes of Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group Meeting, 6 Jan 2015, No.12

Present

N Wilson (Chair), I Draper, D Mace, H Wilcox, M Tribe, S Lacey, S Barnhurst-Davies,
A Smith, S Bircham-Walker, A Foster, R Ford, J Brentor, R Hewlett, P Favier, A Hayward, C Bird,
M Norman, L Norman, H Mace (Secretary), S Hughes (WC), J Johnson (WC),

1. **Apologies** I Campbell

2. **Declaration of Interests & registration**

See previous minutes

3. **Review & agree minutes**

Agreed.

4. **Chairman's Report**

Nikki welcomed Sarah and Julian to the meeting, saying that she had met Sarah on 15 Dec to discuss the Plan progress (notes had been distributed of this meeting). She stated that Sarah would be summarising her thoughts on progress so far and taking questions. Other meetings that had taken place since the last steering group included the first editorial meeting on drafting the plan and the survey winners draw at the White Horse.

5. **Sarah Hughes**

Sarah explained that, as NPlans are new, all involved are still feeling their way on both how to progress them and their place within the planning process. Developers have been slow to see their importance. There are currently 2 appeals where a NPlan is being taken into account. Not many have been adopted yet in Wiltshire (only Malmesbury). In S Wilts Winterslow and Idmiston are a little ahead of us in the process. The Government has put aside £15m for NPlans.

In answer to questions from the steering group Sarah made the following points:

- a. **SHLAA sites** – initiative from government to identify potential land for building. Most land is put forward by the owner. Initial checks are carried out to sieve out SSSIs, flood plain sites etc. The next step is to look at local practicalities of development (eg proximity to junctions). If we want to allocate sites in the Plan we will need to do this. Evidence is required to back any inclusions.
- b. SHLAA sites are phased in 5 year bands. Anyone can put forward land for the SHLAA - WC will not include in the first 5 year band until checked out with landowner.
- c. Sarah will investigate the Downton SHLAA sites that given as 'multiple ownership/ ownership unknown'. 99% of sites are put forward by the owner.
- d. There is a framework for assessing sites – Sarah will send this to Nikki.
- e. Adding the number of houses to allocated sites in the Plan is helpful to any developer. This establishes the principal of allowing development (maybe equivalent to a high level planning application).
- f. WC is reviewing and revising settlement boundaries to reflect the reality of buildings previously approved and to ensure the consistent application of planning policies across the county. For those communities who have not embarked on producing a NPlan WC will have to allocate land for development for them.
- g. We can make changes to our settlement boundary within the Plan.
- h. We can suggest development is phased by saying that only X number of houses can be built until Y is carried out.

- i. Any allocated sites in the Plan must be deliverable – landowner agreed and screened for practicalities with evidence.
- j. **190 houses** in Downton in the WC Core Strategy– is not fixed, is liable to be reviewed in line with government requirements (ie it is an iterative process).
- k. Perhaps consider whether we should go for more than 190 houses in order to, for example, get a new school. (S Lacey pointed out later in the meeting that WC have previously advised the Parish Council that the tipping point for getting sufficient funding from developer S106 agreements for a new school is around 600 to 700 new homes)
- l. Even when several applications are made together they can only be considered individually (rather than looking at the bigger picture) in case one developer pulls out for any reason. However, when doing its site allocations, the NPlan could group 2 or more plots of land (or parts thereof) together.
- m. WC does have a 5 year land supply for houses required within the county (about 6.5 years, in fact). However this is not fixed - need to keep updating it as time moves on.
- n. Downton is a service centre so need to consider the effect of new development in the villages of neighbouring parishes e.g. in the Redlynch area.
- o. **The Plan** timetable – Sarah thought our projected timings were realistic although we must be careful to build in enough time for PC and public consultation.
- p. She was unsure how long the approval by WC would take (will find out). An inspector has yet to be appointed.
- q. She is happy to regularly receive drafts of the Plan to see if we are keeping on track.
- r. The plan will have validity in planning applications once it has been formally submitted to WC (late summer).
- s. The Plan, unlike the Village Design Statement, should hold as much weight as the Core Strategy. It is early days to say how much note developers are taking of Nplans.
- t. For it to have weight the Village Design Statement needs to be incorporated into the NPlan rather than just making reference to it.
- u. The Wiltshire Core Strategy will be adopted soon. NPlan must not conflict with the Strategy. Sarah thought, but not tested yet, that if the Strategy changed as result of government intervention, in such a way that it is in conflict with the Plan, then we'd have to amend the relevant section of the Plan. She did not know whether we would need a second referendum.
- v. Consultation Statement introduction should contain the detail and the Plan introduction be brief.
- w. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) – emerging policy but levels should be decided by the spring (effectively a roof tax, variable – 2 geographical zones in Wiltshire).
- x. If no NPlan, 15% of CIL goes direct to the community, with NPlan this rises to 25%.
- y. S106 money still applies for certain categories of developer funding and will go direct to WC as now. Money allocated to a community must be used on items of expenditure that arise as a direct result of the development.
- z. Affordable housing policy – Downton is in 30% band.
- aa. Health facilities are outside WC control
- bb. WC holds a list of projects for CIL money. It is theoretically possible to approach to request Leisure Centre be added to this.
- cc. She suggested adding a policy to the Plan to protect open spaces within the village.
- dd. The Campus programme concept if accepted can be built into the plan.
- ee. Sarah will find out if a High Level Sustainability Appraisal is needed if we choose to allocate sites in the Plan.

ff. She is happy to be contacted for help but would prefer the number of people to be limited to avoid repetition. Nikki to provide names. Also please copy Sarah if go direct to another Dept/person within WC.

6. **Quantitative Survey results**

544 completed survey (69 online, 475 paper) represents nearly 40% of Downton households although acknowledged that a few households did submit more than one response. This was considered a good result. Charts comparing demographics of the sample with census and electoral roll data, showed that a) as with past surveys the sample is biased towards older age group and b) the geographical distribution by area was remarkably consistent with actual data. A summary of the questions average scores shows most are within the band of 3 - 4 (4 was strongly agree, the highest point on scale). Only 4 were below 3 but still above the mid-point of 2.5. These high scores were considered to validate the earlier qualitative research. There was discussion over the most frequently selected cluster size which was 15, as to whether it conflicts with other results. The survey results indicate that land along and off the A338 is the most favoured area for any future housing development.

The full results can be accessed at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ib7zrbry16jbx2s/Autumn%20survey%20summary.xls?dl=0>

Hilary will condense the data into user friendly charts to be included in the Plan appendices.

7. **Editorial Group Update**

Following a meeting of the Editorial Group, chapters are being drafted as follows:

Local economy – Mike and Lucy

Housing – Ian D

Traffic - Ian C

Local facilities – Jane and Helen

Landscape and green areas – to be appointed

Rural economy – to be appointed

8. **Engagement Group Update**

Following successful survey distribution and collection, posters thanking residents have been put up and thank you letters sent to collection point outlets and those donating prizes. An article publicising the draw (including names of winners and businesses donating prizes) has been sent to the Journal and local magazines.

9. **AOB**

None

10. **Next meeting** - Tuesday 3rd February 2015, 7.30pm, White Horse.