

Benson Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

Meeting 2: 26 Feb 16

Benson Parish Hall

Present: Phillip Murray (Chair of this meeting), Catherine Murray, Michael Winton, Lorna Denby, Dave Rushton, Frank Farquharson, Edel McGurk, Andrew Ashcroft (consultant), Martyn Spence, Jon Fowler (from 6.30).

SC = *Steering Committee*

Item	Actions
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>1.1 EM nominated to take minutes 1.2 PM acted as Chair, given that JF would be late.</p>	
<p>2. Review of minutes of last meeting</p> <p>2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.</p> <p>2.2 SC members queried whether 'landscape' fits in the Housing theme. They reflected that it may be appropriate because of the aesthetics of the setting of housing in the landscape. It was agreed that this would be kept under review as policies are developed.</p>	All to consider
<p>3. Vision, Objectives & Policies</p> <p>3.1 The purpose of this session was to generate a draft vision and set of objectives for the NP as a lead in to development of policies.</p> <p>3.2 AA offered guidance as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The constrained timeframe for Benson's NP development means that the SC will be generating policies in the absence of the normal level of community engagement;• Using an example, AA outlined the 3 step process as (i) deciding a vision for plan, (ii) underpinning that with objectives, and (iii) using those objectives to produce distinctive policies;• The skill is in developing a plan that is distinctive;• To be worth doing, the NP should add value to general council level plans. It must address housing needs, shaping how we envisage meeting the targets set to 2031.• We should take a proportionate approach to the evidence base - we may be able to use existing analysis for fairly 'stable' themes like Built heritage, but are likely to require more recent up to date information for e.g. housing needs.• We must be cautious about using words like 'remain' which may have negative connotations.	

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<p><u>VISION development</u></p> <p>3.3 The SC members agreed the following concepts should be reflected in the Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Housing that meets local needs; b. Sensitive design that reflects and respects the heritage; c. A larger more diverse village centre with shops (AA recommended we ensure we clarify the purpose of this one - i.e. to make the village more sustainable or to achieve growth as a primary aim); d. An economically prosperous place; e. Recreation - health and well-being; f. A 'large village', not a town, in contact with its own history; g. Maintain character and a sense of community; h. Attractive community with a sense of heritage; i. Integrated settlement but surrounded by green space; j. Infrastructure to enable us to prosper - a modern village - and to sustain the community; k. Maintain and enhance biodiversity interest with opportunities to engage with nature; l. Importance of connection with the river (noting that at one time the village was known as 'Benson-on-Thames'); m. Connectivity within itself and the outside world. <p>3.4 The SC agreed that these elements might be expressed as:</p> <p>'Benson will accommodate the levels of growth needed to accommodate local housing needs 'whilst retaining the distinctive character of a large rural village next to the Chilterns and alongside the River Thames. The plan will promote and encourage a thriving, vibrant and modern village centre meeting the social, cultural and economic needs of the community, and will ensure that Benson retains its distinctive character.'</p> <p>3.5 AA advised that a clear understanding of the purpose of each element and careful choice of words is required to ensure that the vision reflects the actual motivation and intent. For example, with respect to the aspirations for the village centre, we should consider whether this is about encouraging people to shop in Benson? Is it about making it more attractive or about active encouragement of business investment? PM agreed to refine the wording and circulate for comment.</p> <p>3.6 The SC reflected that it may be beneficial to identify another village of c 3000 residents to use as a role model, one that has accommodated expansion whilst remaining a village.</p>	<p>PM to circulate a draft vision for comment.</p> <p>All to consider</p>

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<p><u>Objective Development:</u></p> <p>3.7 In writing objectives, we must recognise that developers cannot be expected to address an existing problem or lack of provision. The SC agreed the following objective headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Delivery of housing - right type scale, design, style; b. Character & setting - bounding the village and avoiding coalescence with neighbouring settlements; c. Design and Appearance; d. Modern vibrant facilities; e. Vibrant Village Centre; f. New development supported and underpinned by suitable infrastructure, with transport issues mitigated - this is where transport solutions could be picked up. g. Economic prosperity; h. Leisure and recreation facilities/environmental well-being. <p>3.8 The SC proposed the following draft objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To provide housing that meets local needs b. To cater for growth in a manner which maintains the 'distinct' and separate character of the village c. To cater for growth in a manner which respects Benson's setting in the rural landscape and its close association with the River Thames d. To ensure that Benson has a modern vibrant village centre e. To ensure there are adequate facilities to serve a growing local population f. To ensure the sustainability of economic enterprise [activity] in the neighbourhood plan area g. To safeguard [maintain/enhance] existing green infrastructure and secure the provision of additional green space connected to the wider countryside h. To ensure that new development contributes towards the free and safe flow of traffic, offering suitable mitigation and (ii) provides safe pedestrian and cycle access in general, and in particular to the village centre. 	<p>EM and PM to refine draft objectives to reflect final vision wording</p>

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<p>4. Timetable</p> <p>4.1 The SC noted the timetable provided by AA. Week 11, by which time a number of key milestones need to be met, is the week commencing 7th Mar 16. The rationale for the tight timetable was discussed, and the SC agreed that, until there is greater certainty about SODC's position on a number of matters, we will need to stick to the timetable proposed.</p> <p>4.2 AA advised on the importance of ensuring the SODC are prepared to keep pace with the rate of progress we need to set, particularly so that we do not miss out any necessary community engagement.</p> <p>4.3 The priority task is to prepare a mandate document, sending it out during the week commencing 7 March, to seek community support for the proposed vision and objectives.</p> <p>4.4 The SC discussed circulation of the mandate:</p> <p><u>Channels:</u> Survey Monkey lends itself to seeking views cheaply and quickly on a simple set of questions. Only a proportion of the community, however, will use the internet and social media, so the SC agreed we will need other channels to ensure broad reach. JF agreed to discuss with the circulation team for the Benson Bulletin. It was agreed that if the BB circulation team could not help that we should seek support from our volunteer panel.</p> <p><u>Timing:</u> The SC considered combining despatch of the mandate with the Housing Needs Survey (see item 7), given the latter will need to be sent out shortly. After discussion, the SC concluded that it is important that the mandate is received by the community <u>before</u> the Housing Needs Survey arrives; to bundle the two could cause confusion for recipients and potentially risk harming response rates.</p>	<p>JF to talk to Luke Brown to clarify expectations.</p> <p>LD and Comms gp to produce once vision/objs agreed</p> <p>JF to contact Ivor re hard copy distribution</p> <p>LD and comms gp to plan on two circulations</p>
<p>5. Logo</p> <p>5.1 The SC discussed options for a logo. This needs to be agreed quickly so that the website and materials can be branded. Three possible styles were discussed including: cartoon [a draft was shared], photo (vintage or otherwise) or line drawing. Two members of the SC supported use of a vintage photo, but a number were concerned that this may not strike the forward-looking note we are seeking. PM agreed to discuss with the marketing and comms sub-group, and will advise further. In view of time, we will need to go with the majority view.</p>	<p>Action - PM to discuss with Mar/com group.</p>

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<p>6. Engaging Volunteers</p> <p>6.1 DR queried whether the volunteers had been contacted and what our aspiration is for involving them. The SC agreed that we want to get volunteers involved, particularly in supporting the work of the theme work streams. LD explained that an email update had been prepared. This should be sent as an interim update, and can be followed up with further information (e.g. outline of work-streams and biographies, inviting volunteers to express an interest in helping with specific work-streams that particular interest them or they have specialist expertise to offer.)</p>	<p>LD to send update email to volunteers</p> <p>EM to complete biographies and LD to consider next comms</p>
<p>7. Housing Needs Survey (HNS)</p> <p>7.1 MS updated the SC on discussions with Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) on procuring a Housing Needs Survey (HNS). CFO has quoted £2528+VAT to prepare the survey and analyse results. The SC supported acceptance of the bid, subject to confirmation that a single tender action does not breach any Parish Council procurement rules. The bid appears to meet value for money requirements, and given CFO undertook a previous survey here, it is likely to be able to meet our time constraints.</p> <p>7.2 A draft HNS has been provided. MS will review the content and seek SC comments only if necessary.</p> <p>7.3 The date for sending out the HNS will be confirmed once the SC has determined when the Mandate (See para 4.4) will be sent out. MS explained that the SC will have control of when the HNS will be distributed. We will need to liaise closely with CFO though to ensure an appropriate response deadline is set.</p>	<p>Action - JF to check procurement rules with Parish Council</p> <p>MS to review HNS contents</p> <p>MS to discuss with CFO</p>
<p>8. Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday 10 March at Benson Parish Hall (if available). EM volunteered to host if the room is unavailable.</p>	<p>PM to check meeting room availability</p>

Minutes taken by EM
END