

# Benson Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Meeting

13 June 2017

## Minutes

**Present:** Jon Fowler (JF), Dave Rushton (DR), Edel McGurk (EM), Philip Murray (PM), Catherine Murray (CM) Martyn Spence (MS) Andrew Ashcroft (AA), Michael Winton (MW).

Actions highlighted in **bold**. SC = Steering Committee

1. Review of Actions from previous meeting (notes below limited to actions requiring further work.)

1.i) PM confirmed with Lorna Denby and Paul Day that PD will take over responsibility for updating the website.

1.ii) Info on biodiversity enhancements for the Parish CIL list is almost complete. **Action EM** to send to JF this week.

1.iii) Action on relative CIL priorities carried over to next meeting. **Action All** to consider, and **Action JF** to add to next agenda.

1.iv) JF has pursued additional funds from Locality. Discussed below.

1.v) DR has commenced work with Transport Sub-Group on the specification of the additional transport study. They recognise the challenge of setting the scope correctly. JF suggested that the statutory body comments on the pre-sub draft plan should provide a guide. **Action DR** to pursue a meeting with SODC Transport lead, James Gagg, to discuss.

1.vi) An action on DR to seek advice from OCC Highways on the costings for road connections to existing network was completed but did not result in any useful information being gleaned. **Action DR** to include this in the scope of the transport study being commissioned.

1.vii) The action on FF to seek advice about accommodating the edge road around the Flood Zone is in progress - **Action FF** to complete by 21 June.

2. Salt Store discussion (evolving into a wider discussion about a Site Suitability analysis for the evidence base).

(i) EM described the issue, which centres on our response to feedback on pre-sub draft plan about this site. This includes: (i) a number of local residents urging us to allocate the Salt Store for nature conservation uses, contending that the site is too far from the 'Riverside' to offer an effective solution to the need for parking, and (ii) OCC, the site owner, asking us to allocate the site for housing, providing a link to Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment conducted in 2016.

(ii) The SC discussion centred on:

- the suitability of the site for development - EM reported on the reaction from the Environment Agency Biodiversity team, which was that the site is entirely unsuitable for development, both on flood risk grounds and because of the proximity to Benson Brook, a chalk stream, which is a globally important habitat; FF confirmed that the site is in Flood Zone 3 so proposals for housing development would likely fail the sequential test.
  - whether the site merits designation as Local Green Space, on the grounds that it plays a key role as part of the village's ecological network, a role that Benson Nature Group has plans to enhance. EM advised that her group believes there is a case for this, but that we had not pursued it because of the aspiration for mixed use, notably as over-flow parking provision should the need arise in the future - DR noted that his group would still aspire to using the site in that way
- (iii) AA advised that we need to make a judgement about whether the site meets the LGS criteria. He offered to visit the site and provide some advice on the likelihood of the site meeting the fairly exacting tests for LGS designation. **Action AA** to visit and provide his advice. **Action EM** to complete an assessment of the site against the LGS criteria in the NPPF.
- (iv) CM stated that this opened a wider discussion about whether our plan should identify areas (either specifically or generally) that are not conducive to development. AA suggested looking at the Brightwell Cum Sotwell Plan for an example of a simple qualitative analysis of sites proposed for allocation, including those actually allocated and those that are not. It was agreed that we should produce something similar to illustrate our decisions, to be appended as a technical annex. It should include the main sites considered and any that have been subsequently suggested through consultation on the Pre-sub draft plan.

**Action PM, FF, DR and EM** to form a small sub-group to undertake the site suitability analysis (likely to be addressed in early July).

### 3. School Field

- (i) EM described the issue which is our response to several pieces of Local Resident feedback querying why the School Field is not designated as LGS. (In addition to the plan consultation, there has been some unrelated heated community debate on social media about the importance of safeguarding the field for the recreational benefit it provides. Our draft plan did not adequately explain our decision not to designate as LGS (based on the need to allow for school expansion, which may require some 'land take' from the field), nor was it necessarily explicit in the right places in the plan about where alternative playing field facilities would be provided (It was covered under Recreation/Community Facilities but not explained under Education).
- (ii) AA advised that all LGS designations are discretionary. In determining a way forward, we need to make a judgement about which is more important, supporting the expansion of the school which is required to ensure Benson is a sustainable place to live, or safeguarding the field for the benefits it provides for the community including recreational, environmental, cultural and aesthetic/design benefits. The

expansion of the school is a key component of a development proposal that has already been consented in principle. Our decision should not frustrate that.

- (iii) MS reminded the SC that the school field is held in trust, having been bought and safeguarded for the benefit of the children of the village. DR noted that during the discussions about the Littleworth Road development proposals, it was clear that a sufficient proportion of the School Field was expected to be retained as green space to accommodate informal recreation at breaks; the replacement playing field is intended to provide for formal games and PE.
- (iv) EM described some of the options that could be considered, explaining that a discussion with the Trustees is planned to consider the matter. JF reported that OCC Education state that the School Expansion feasibility study they have commissioned will not be available for some time. The SC committee agreed that the next draft of the plan should explain the matter better. A final decision on the LGS question will be taken following the forthcoming meeting with the Trustees.

**Action EM** to draft text for the plan explaining the matter, and to report back following the meeting with the Trustees

#### 4. Locality Grant

- (i) JF received some written advice from Locality in response our request for additional funds to pay for the necessary transport study; the advice suggested a misunderstanding about the basis for the request. SODC indicated in our last meeting with them that they may be able to fund the work if Locality cannot. Once we have developed the scope of the transport study, we will submit to Locality.

**Action JF** to write to Ricardo and Gary Palmer to seek their support in making the case for the additional funding required.

#### 5. Work-stream Feedback

- (i) JF has provided the topic-specific chapters to each workstream lead so that they can make minor and uncontroversial changes. Team members provided a verbal update on progress. PM reminded stream leaders to provide him with a list of contentious or major areas of feedback. The SC agreed that to make efficient progress with the task, it won't be possible to involve the whole SC in a discussion about every piece of feedback. Sub-groups will be established to deal with workstream-specific matters, involving the lead and JF and PM for consistency.

**Action all** to respond to PM by Sunday 25th.

#### 6. AoB

- DR sought update on Chalgrove and West Waddy meetings. PM confirmed that a meeting with West Waddy to discuss the development at Ben 1 Phase 2 is scheduled for 16 June.

**Action PM** to pursue a meeting with HCA.

**Action DR** to seek insight into HCA reaction to Chalgrove Plan.

**Action DR** to seek meeting with SODC Transport lead James Gagg

- DR queried whether the DWH application had been received. JF reported that it has not. The SC reflected on the importance of a joined-up coherent approach to the edge road proposal, with AA suggesting that a master plan approach may be worthy of consideration. It is critical that we hold the line across all of the developers proposing sites that are reliant on the edge road.
- CM flagged up the challenge of addressing the volume of comments from Historic England. AA reiterated his advice that not all comments have to be acted upon.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 11th July at 7pm at the Parish Hall.