

Benson Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Meeting  
2 June 2016

Minutes

Present - Jon Fowler (JR), Frank Farquharson (FF), Dave Rushton (DR), Edel McGurk (EM), Catherine Murray (CM), Philip Murray (PM) Lorna Denby (LD), and (from 8.30pm) Andrew Ashcroft (AA)

Apologies - Martyn Spence (MS); Michael Winton (MW)

SC= Steering Committee.  
EM volunteered to take minutes

### 1. Review of Actions

- 1.1 JF contacted CFO re initial data from survey - no response yet.
- 1.2 EM has not yet sent revised policies to AA as they are still being developed

### 2. Drop-in Session

2.1 JF had circulated a revised layout for the event. SC members were content with this.

2.2 SC member availability for the drop in event is as follows:

- Friday 10th - JF, EM, FF, DR, MS, PM, CM
- Saturday 11th - FF, DR, MW, MS, LD, PM, CM

2.3 Room for drop-in event is available all day Friday which will enable early set-up. JF, DR and FF will arrange.

2.4 LD volunteered to set up a comments sheet. The sheet should include an option for people to leave name and address if they want a response.

2.5 Content of boards to include Vision and Objectives; Process flow; Timeline; Issues and Draft policies (5 work-streams), photographs where necessary, village map showing possible development sites. Strategic Infrastructure/Transport strand will use the fixed blue board beneath the screen. Introductory material will be attached to a red board, positioned near the door. Each other workstream will have 2 blue boards.

2.6 JF will man the door on Friday to welcome people and count the number of people attending; LD will take this role on Saturday.

**Action - LD** to draft comment sheet and send to the Parish Clerk for printing (c 100 copies)

**Action - JF, DR and FF** to liaise to arrange set up

**Action - JF** will ask Pete to order velcro stickers

**Action - LD** to design a common-themed banner for each workstream and produce the introductory material.

**Action - FF** to get an A1-sized print of the village map

**Action - All workstream leads** to take responsibility for their own content. It will need to be sent to Pete by Wednesday 8th so that it can be printed in time.

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**Action - LD** to produce a poster to advertise the event. LD to ask Nick Duncan if he can put the posters up. Alternatively FF could put up the posters (DR has boards which will need to be collected from him).

### 3. Littleworth Lane Phase 2

3.1 JF reported on an SODC presentation for reps of 'Larger Villages re the update to the Core Strategy. An 8 week consultation will commence on 27 June re preferred options (for allocations). Implication for Benson are that it is likely to be required to take a minimum of 190 houses over the period from now till 2032. This remains to be confirmed. It is possible that the proposed allocation will have limited weight in determining planning applications as it has not been out to consultation yet.

3.2 JF will represent the Parish Council at the Planning Committee on 8 June at which Phase 2 of the Littleworth Lane proposal will be considered. DR and FF will fill the additional 5 minutes between them. Topics to be covered in presentations at Planning Committee:

- Argument that due regard should be given to the emerging strategy (and numbers) in reaching a decision.
- The fact that a NP is in preparation.
- The Parish Council's desire to work with West Waddy about the detailed application, an offer which thus far has not been taken up.
- Transport issues with a focus on sustainability (600-700 additional cars); Issues around plans for Littleworth Lane and associated junctions; Safety Audit does not make any firm commitments.
- Difficulties around school expansion (incl safe routes to school);
- Strategic Infrastructure including flood risk and drainage issues, including the WFD point on Lady Brook raised by EM.

3.3 The presentations can include photographs and plans maps to illustrate points, but presenters will need to ensure that they have actually been received by the committee - don't assume! JF will attend an informal discussion with the one of the Church Trustees to understand their position (which has implications for school expansion).

**Action** EM to talk to FF about Water Framework Directive point.

**Action** JF, DR & FF to prepare for 8 June meeting and report back to the SC.

**Action** JF to meet with Church Trustee.

### 4. Draft policies discussion

4.1 All work stream leads sought advice from AA to better understand the feedback he had provided and its implications for wording:

4.2 CM queried how we should make reference to existing policies eg Conservation Area policy which is out of date and irrelevant. AA advised that increasingly NPs can provide some additional detail because local and national policies are sometimes too vague for the NP to be meaningful and appropriately influential. This raised a further question about how we maintain consistency with national policies if those subsequently change? AA advised that we make sure the critical bits of national policy are included/stated.

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Remember that the examiner can remove content from the draft plan at examination but he or she will not suggest additional content to be included.

4.2 CM sought a steer on how to avoid being over-specific on design. AA advised that the design stream should specify some 'Benson'-relevant design principles. He advised looking at Rotherwick and Stonnall NPs which contain detailed Design themes.

4.3 AA advised EM that the policy on recreational facilities can define the age of children for whom play facilities are needed. It should specify the nature of development that will create the need.

4.4 Although views are not a material planning consideration, our NP and policies can take account of and seek to safeguard Benson's setting in the context of the two AONBs. The key is to get present this in terms of the visual impact, the relationship with the surrounding area, its landscape character, the rural setting and the relationship the village has with that. We could for example seek to safeguard the openness of a particular footpath, but perhaps not a specific view of a valued feature.

4.5 The NP can invite/ encourage offers of enhancement e.g. biodiversity enhancement for existing assets like the Brook, which is currently failing on some aspects of Water Framework Directive requirements. We may build into a policy an intention to direct some of the local element of CIL on enhancements, or should a developer express an interest in investing in such provision, support them to exploring that.

4.6 EM queried how the NP should refer to evidence not yet available (e.g. flood modeling data which the Environment Agency has committed to gathering for Benson and Ewelme in the South East Flood Risk Management Plan). AA advised that we mention it as a marker, which can be taken account of when available as part of the determination of planning applications.

4.7 JF asked whether we can specify that one of the development sites should be earmarked for a burial ground. AA confirmed that the NP can allocate land in this way through a policy. If the landowner does not agree, that will probably result in an objection. The NPPF requires that land has to be 'developable' and come forward with a willing landowner. If necessary, a Compulsory Purchase Order could be considered on the basis of the made NP.

4.8 DR sought advice on how to deal with the likely need for a bigger or new library (referred to in the draft policies as a 'cultural' service or asset). OCC's unwillingness to declare a position on this point is making it difficult to generate a policy containing the specifics that AA has suggested are needed. We can identify this as a community facility and state a policy such as 'Planning permission will be granted for proposals to extend or replace the library'. We cannot plan to use CIL to buy land but could direct it to cover other costs.

4.9 DR sought advice on the Education policy, through which we would seek to match capacity with demand. AA advised that traditionally, the allocation policy of the Authority is not a land use policy, it is their responsibility and judgement. The emerging thinking is that that does not meet sustainability requirements. There is often a lag in school provision

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'catching up' with new needs created by development. OCC is supportive of the need to expand the school, but exactly how that will be achieved is still under discussion, particularly in respect of space for expansion.

4.10 DR shared the thinking on developing transport/traffic policies, one of which relates to the historical road structure in Benson which introduces a number of constraints or notable pinch points, for example at Castle Sq. We could propose a general policy as follows: 'Developments that result in impediment to the free and safe flow of traffic will not be supported', but to really have effect, we will need to understand and account for the traffic-flow implications of developing specific sites. Some sites will deliver greater benefit in terms of improving safe and free flow.

4.11 A brief discussion was held on the proposition for a relief road. The challenge is to line up suitable evidence, OCC support, and landowner interest. The HNS results should offer some insight into the community's strength of feeling on this matter. Although OCC is said to be unsupportive at the present time, there may be a tipping point in future depending on the scale of development envisaged for Benson, and the NP may need to accommodate some reference to that.

4.12 AA provided the following general advice on policies.

- They should use words like 'must' or 'are to' rather than 'should'.
- Don't muddy the distinction between policies and supporting text. The justification for a policy should appear in the supporting text, not in the policy itself.
- We will need to write specific policies to steer development proposals once decisions are reached on which specific sites to bring forward in the NP. Ideally, we will need the results of the Housing Needs Survey to inform that decision and then craft the necessary policies. The SC recognised that our compressed timeframe means policy development had to proceed before having all the necessary information on community views.
- The NP covers anything that would either require planning permission or is 'permitted development'. Consult Planning Practice Guidance section on NPs for further useful information.
- The question of whether the development programme drives investment in community facilities, or the lack of community facilities restricts development is a classic 'chicken and egg'. The NP probably cannot refuse consent on the basis that there are insufficient facilities.

**Action - All workstream leads** to continue to develop policies taking account of AA's advice.

## 6. AoB

NO AOB was raised.

## 7. Date of next meeting

7.1 Next SC meeting is booked for Monday 20 June.

**Action JF** to book room.