

Benson Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee Meeting

10th August 2016

Minutes

Present: John Fowler (JF), Andrew Ashcroft (AA), Frank Farquharson (FF), Dave Rushton (DR), Michael Winton (MW), Edel McGurk (EM), Martyn Spence (MS), Philip Murray (PM), Catherine Murray (CM)

SC = Steering Committee; NP = Neighbourhood Plan

CM took minutes.

1 Apologies: Lorna Denby

2 Actions from Meeting of 18th July (not otherwise covered in agenda):

2.1 EM had pursued matter of Service Families Accommodation with Nikki Hamilton (RAF Benson Community Liaison Officer) and had forwarded reply to SODC. In response SODC declined to remove RAF housing from total for NP area and had been evasive as to reasons why. SC regarded this as unsatisfactory.

Actions: JF to write to SODC again. MW to circulate his email correspondence on this matter with Paula Fox of SODC

2.2 Consultation Statement. SC agreed that: date, numbers of attendees and photos will be required for events; discussion with e.g. OCC or the School should be logged with date; email trails adequate as such.

Action: ALL to continue sending records of consultations to LD

AA to send sample consultation statements from other NPs (CM notes that he did send examples and comment in his email of 19th July and has re-forwarded this to SC)

2.3 Burial Ground: JF had forwarded information to FF

2.4 Comments on Draft Housing Needs Survey: JF had sent comments to Tom, and circulated amended version. SC agreed that JF should officially accept this as final.

Action: JF to confirm acceptability of Final Draft

2.5: SODC Design Guide: CM had incorporated input from EM and DR into her comments on the new Guide and had circulated final version prior to submitting it in response to SODC's consultation.

2.6 DR had circulated draft policies.

2.7 Strategic approach to transport routes: PM had received very positive response from John Howell MP, including an offer of chairing meeting(s) with OCC regarding a relief road and broader regional transport. PM is trying to contact Mark Gray before following up with JH. EM and FF willing to attend meeting with OCC when arranged.

Action: PM to liaise with Mark Gray

2.8 Warwick Spinney: EM had spoken to Rob Anderson Besant (RAB). Warwick Spinney was outside the plan area but was owned by Benson Community Association, and RAB was keen to explore opportunities for tying-in its use with the Littleworth Road development, and for involving conservation volunteers. However, the ownership was subject to a constitution and the Trustees could take issue. DR was of the opinion that the matter could be complex.

Action: EM to pursue as long as practical

2.9 Permissive path to Preston Crowmarsh: EM has discussed with DR and concluded that it would be unlikely that the NP process could be used to establish the path as a Public Right of Way but that it could perhaps be included as an aspiration. AA suggested that it could be included in a “non land-use” section of the Plan.

Action: EM and DR to discuss further and approach Parish Council via the Clerk and the Rec and Lands Committee

2.10 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre: EM had made a data request for a fee within budget, but would welcome the possibility of using TVERC more widely .eg for site surveys or for design of an ecological network of wildlife corridors through Benson to support the work of the Plan. This would be expensive e.g. £900 or more but there might be opportunities for securing input as part of a pilot or in connection with a volunteer scheme. SC agreed that further work could be valuable but would need to be secured without such great expense.

Action: EM to continue negotiations with TVERC

3 Additional Sites

3.1 JF explained that these were not necessarily housing sites but land to be ear-marked for some other community use. DR had made a list, but it was now necessary to make a conscious decision as to whether they should be included in the Plan or not, and with what suggested use.

3.2 The Paddock (beyond the allotments): the SC agreed that this could be useful as a burial ground, but only if access were made available through BEN 7 or if the current track could be improved, by use of CIL money from other development. The site is perhaps slightly less than the half acre required, and some members expressed concerns that the site would not prove large enough in the long term given the current demographic.

3.3 Warwick Spinney: the SC agreed that there were two potential uses. Either as a nature reserve or that it would be suitable for providing an expanded Library / heritage centre.

3.4 Bertie West Field: the SC agreed on use as a playground.

3.5 The Salt (Mineral) Store: suggested for car parking and/or nature reserve. High biodiversity value of gravels, together with concerns regarding possible run-off into the brook and river favour nature reserve. But huge demand for car parking is recognised. JF reported that he was currently negotiating with OCC on behalf of the Parish Council regarding the lease.

Action: ALL to consider further

3.6 Aldridge land off Brook Street: while this had been previously identified by SODC as a green space, it was thought that the current owner may not be sympathetic to this use.

3.7 Alternative use of the allotments, with allotment function re-located elsewhere: this was not considered practical or desirable, given the size of the allotments, the lack of available land elsewhere, and the desirability of keeping allotments within ready walking distance of the village.

3.8 Land off Watlington Road beyond The Meer: this is earmarked as a rural exception site for SOHA. However, OCC own land, and are known to have rejected offers that do not reflect its commercial value. The SC debated its merits as a nature reserve or as a small site capable of providing the small size of development favoured by responses to the Housing Needs Survey, but recognised that development here would not necessarily deter development of the larger sites as well. The SEA will help to inform decisions.

3.8 AA warned against tying the NP too rigidly to the sites identified by SODC, and explained that the NP has a blank sheet, albeit there is need to come up with a rational figure for the amount of development. AA also warned that SODC will not be worried about how they achieve their 5-year land supply and will have to approve any development until they have achieved it. He clarified the following principles:

- If the NP designates a site for a particular use there has to be expectation that the site will be delivered for that purpose. NB the owner might have other options.
- The NP could prescribe limited small-scale development across several/ all of the SODC sites, but the SEA would have to support/provide evidence of the benefits of this approach, and the small sites would have to come forward within the trajectory, and the Plan would have to present means of ensuring adequate CIL to cover the infrastructure requirements – this would be hard to achieve through multiple small-scale developments, particularly with drainage and other requirements.

Action: JF to update DR's document with the potential uses discussed and re-circulate.

ALL to have final round of considering the sites and uses.

4 Progress on policy development

4.1 Transport: AA has commented on policies and DR will prepare final version. With regard to EV charging points, AA was concerned that there was no evidence to support the general requirement as part of the Plan, whether it had been part of an SODC condition or not - there may have been particular circumstances in that instance. However, he

suggested leaving it in at the draft stage. DR noted that it would be more reasonable to require one for every dwelling rather than one for every parking space. DR's map of footpaths and bus stops was commended.

4.2 Education: AA suggested that the SC should not be wary of including wider SODC/national policy content if so desired. He would re-write it in "examiner speak" as necessary.

4.3 Green Infrastructure: EM was making progress and would have draft policies by end of August. However, she was still in the process of meeting with relevant parties, including with SODC on 2nd September.

4.4 Design: CM had met with the Design Team and should have draft policies by the end of the week. AA advised that a Design Statement could be included as part of the NP and did not have to have been through a separate approval procedure - he quoted an instance of an examiner agreeing to approve one as part of a plan. He also referred to examples of Design Statements in plans for Rotherwick and Stonnall.

4.5 Housing: MS had prepared and circulated four policies. It was noted that design of the houses was being covered by the Design Team but that the types of housing (e.g. bungalows, semis, terraces etc) should arise from the Housing Needs Survey and be covered by the Housing policies. AA advised that a requirement for 20% of affordable housing to be reserved for local people would be contrary to national policy and human rights.

4.6 Infrastructure: FF would be sending draft policies to AA early next week.

Actions: Work Stream leaders to send draft policies to AA as above

5 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

5.1 JF requested help from AA in sourcing further consultants, given that only one of those previously approached had expressed an interest, and at a very high price. AA was hopeful that one of the previous contacts from Land Use Consultants would in fact be available to work to preparation of the Plan for October. The SC noted that this would provide a second quote and that this could be valid given the attempts and failure to source a third.

5.2 AA will be attending a meeting at Chinnor which should clarify SODC expectations.

6 NP Timeline

6.1 In the light of the progress with policies and the possibilities for an SEA, JF considered that the NP was on course for presentation in December.

7 Map production

7.1 EM had received offer of help from Alice Jones-Evans to liaise with SODC regarding the use of the Council's GIS base layers, but AJE would need to understand what the Team needed.

Action: ALL to identify map requirements

8 Meeting with SODC

8.1 This would be held on 17th August at 7pm in the Parish Hall. Simon Rowberry of SODC would be in attendance. The purpose of the meeting would be to discuss how SODC will be able to interface with the NP in timely manner. There would also be need to understand what status the NP would have in the event that SODC did not achieve their 5-year land supply. EM advised that Gayle Wootton of SODC will also attend, and that this would give some opportunity for discussion of Green Infrastructure principles.

9 Developer Meetings

9.1 A meeting with David Wilson Homes, Developers for BEN 3 and BEN 4 had been arranged and held on 9th August. The reaction of the developer team to the suggestion that Benson had already met its SHMA allocation was noted, as was the implication that design meant applying a local gloss to standard house types. Concerns were raised regarding the density and the potential trade-off for any concessions, but the approach to parking provision and green space around the retained footpath were welcome.

9.2 PM queried whether we should be giving ready views on e.g. alternative sites and SODC approach. JF advocated consistency and considered that the views had been consistent with the previous meeting with Gladmans.

10 AOB

10.1 George Verdon's letter about the archive/heritage centre: as before it was agreed that this should be part of an extended library, albeit negotiation with OCC had not progressed.

10.2 CM to take lead on policy for village separation/green buffers, with input from EM. The SEA would be relevant to this.

Action: CM to do draft policy

10.3 EM will be meeting with Dominic Lamb – Countryside Officer for SODC & Vale on 2nd September to discuss likely principles for Green Infrastructure given that relevant study for revised Local Plan had proved disappointing and that no up-date had been approved so far.

10.4 DR explained the small changes to the location of traffic surveys. He also explained the rationale for the speeding figures he had circulated as being consistent with OCC practice.

11 Date of next meeting: 31st August 7pm Parish Hall