



Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Working Group Meeting

Held Virtually

Date: 24 February 2021

Start: 6pm

Present

Steering Group Members

Cllr Richard Wood (MWPC) (Chair)
Cllr John Glover (MWPC)
Cllr Pat Aves (MTC)
Cllr Adrienne Westbrook
Cllr Phil Alford (WC)

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)
Lorraine McRandle (MWPC)
David McKnight (MTC)
Patsy Clover (MTC)

ii. Community Representatives:

Shirley McCarthy (Environment)
Colin Harrison (Chamber of Commerce)
Chris Holden (MCAP)
Bill Scott (Semington Parish Council)
Mark Harris (Bowerhill Village Hall Committee and BRAG)

Place Studio:

Vaughan Thompson

DRAFT NOTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. To Elect a Vice Chair (following the resignation of Cllr Tony Watts from the Steering Group)

Councillor Westbrook (MTC) was elected as Vice Chair of the Steering Group.

4. Public Participation

Mark Harris advised the Steering Group that he wished to keep abreast of what was happening with regard to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Bill Scott reminded the Steering Group that Semington Parish Council and the Steering Group shared the Kennet and Avon Canal and that the Parish Council wanted to assist with the protection of this asset.

The Parish Clerk advised members that WALPA had submitted their press release which had received good coverage but no response from Wiltshire Council or local MPs. A decision to write to the Secretary of State and the Minister for Housing had been made. MWPC had offered their support to WALPA. MTC would consider the matter at their Full Council meeting on 1 March.

5. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference had been considered by representatives from the Steering Group, who were in agreement, and it was agreed that approval for them would now be sought from both Councils.

6. Finance Report

The Parish Clerk confirmed that no money had been spent by the Steering Group since the last meeting.

7. Closed Session

It was agreed that there was no need to enter a closed session.

8. Notes of Recent Meetings

The notes from meetings held on 27 January, 4 February and 11 February were received and approved.

9. Local Plan Review

Vaughan reminded members that there were three responses to discuss: the emerging strategy, planning for Melksham and empowering rural communities. Once both Councils have approved the content of the responses, they can be emailed to Wiltshire Council or transferred to an online form for submission. The responsibility for the review of, correction, enhancement and any additions to the responses now lay with the Steering Group.

Vaughan briefly articulated the main points raised in the responses:

- The emerging strategy included a large amount of repetition of the first question in the planning for Melksham response – primarily regarding growth. His aim had been to articulate the strength of feeling regarding Wiltshire Council’s decision to aim for the higher rate of housing development which conflicted with other objectives.
- The Planning for Melksham document produced the largest response to six questions. A request had been made for further dialogue regarding housing development on brownfield land. Social, environmental and economic factors had been considered in conjunction with the evidence base for the NDP. The aim had been to be positive and proactive.
- The key issue for the Empowering Rural Communities response had been whether the number of units being proposed for Shaw and Whitley – 95 - was the right approach. The resulting response was Place’s thinking.

Shirley McCarthy believed that agreement should be sought with Chippenham particularly regarding arguments that Melksham has in common with Chippenham such as the River Avon, a large development to one side of each town and the issues caused by out-commuting.

It was felt that only minor amendments could be made to the responses at this stage due to time constraints.

Councillor Westbrook thought that the need to enhance the town centre and the Assembly Hall was demonstrated well and was happy to put the document to MTC.

The Parish Clerk advised members of Councillor Baines’ wish for the two sentences in Chippenham’s report regarding the brownfield target to be included in Melksham’s response.

Councillor Wood thought that the response regarding education was ambiguous and asked for this to be changed.

The need for fourth generation artificial grass (4G ATP) for both Melksham Town FC and Melksham Rugby FC was put forward by Councillor Glover.

Members also felt that it was important to reflect the need for different housing types and social housing to encourage a proper through-flow in the housing market.

It was agreed that the draft response could be shared with Chippenham, Atworth and Semington Councils and that a publicity campaign should be undertaken to encourage residents to submit their own responses to the Local Plan Review; and to promote the joint working and responses to the Local Plan Review that have been produced by the NHP Steering Group, Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council.

10. Planning Examiner

Vaughan explained that the majority of questions could be worked on by Place Consultants. However, the question from developers regarding land allocation was a complicated issue to deal with. Vaughan recommended delivering a robust 'knock-out' blow to the examiner to protect the delivery of the Plan by bringing in a colleague of his, Gwilym Jones who knows the NPPF inside out. He could liaise with David Way to ensure that Wiltshire Council and the Steering Group are singing from the same hymn sheet and would be able to commence work immediately.

There was unanimous approval to this approach.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk and Town Council Clerk would contact the Examiner to advise that a response would be imminent.

11. To approve invoice from Place Consultants and to consider delegated powers for authorising payment of future invoices if meetings not being held regularly

It was proposed by Councillor Wood, seconded by Councillor Westbrook and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the next payment due of £2,800 plus VAT.

12. Date of Next Meeting of Steering Group

The next meeting will take place in closed session on 3 March 2021 at 6pm via Zoom.

A vote of thanks to Place Consultants, Vaughan Thompson and Katie Lea was proposed by Councillor Westbrook on the Local Plan Review responses. It was also noted that the Melksham Area Neighbourhood Plan had been complimented by Chippenham Town Council in their response to the Local Plan Review.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm.