



Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting

Date: Wednesday 27 April 2022

Start: 6.30 pm

Present:

Steering Group Members Present:

Councillor Richard Wood (MWPC) (Chair)

Councillor John Glover (MWPC)

Councillor Saffi Rabey (MTC)

Councillor S Crundell (MTC) (left the meeting at 6.55 pm)

John Hamley (Melksham Transport User Group)

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)

Lorraine McRandle (MWPC)

Christine Hunter (MTC)

Patsy Clover (MTC) until
6.55pm)

In attendance:

Councillor David Pafford (MWPC)

Via Zoom:

Shirley McCarthy (Environment)

Chris Holden (MCAP)

Councillor Mike Sankey (WC)

Vaughan Thomson (Place Studio)

Councillor Alan Baines (MWPC) Housing Task Group

Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC) Housing, Bypass & Canal Task Groups

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Councillor Richard Wood, welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from, Colin Harrison, Melksham Chamber (due to work commitments) and Rolf Brindle (for health reasons) representative for transport. Councillor Simon Crundell and Patsy Clover (MTC) confirmed they had to leave the meeting at 6.55 pm. Chris Holden confirmed he had to leave the meeting at 7.30 pm.

2. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest. The MWPC Clerk suggested that members of the new task groups completed a Register of Interests for the Neighbourhood Plan area (this was in addition to any that they had already

completed as a councillor as it was for a wider area, covering both Melksham and Melksham Without).

3. Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

4. To agree the Notes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2022.

The Parish Clerk explained that at a meeting of the Melksham Town Council Economic Development and Planning Committee held on 25 April 2022 two actions had been asked of the Steering Group as follows:

When more than two councillors are attending a meeting from either the Town or Parish Council, they are minuted as being “in attendance”.

It was felt by those present that it was clear in the minutes that of the three representatives from Melksham Without, only two had voting rights and which two it was at the meeting.

Councillor S Crundell be asked to inform substitute Melksham Town Councillors if he is unable to attend a meeting to ensure representation.

Unanimously Resolved: That the notes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Housing Task Group

a) The Task Group members to date were noted:

Councillor David Pafford (MWPC) LEAD

Councillor Richard Wood (MWPC)

Councillor Alan Baines (MWPC)

Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC)

Councillor Pat Aves (MTC)

b) Members were asked to contact anyone who they thought would be interested in joining the Task Groups to increase membership. It was agreed to ask for representation from Melksham Town Council on the Local Green Space, the A350 Bypass & Canal Groups and to invite Melksham Town Council’s Environment and Climate Working Group to become members of the Climate Issue Task Group. Further Town Council representation on the Housing Task Group would also be useful.

c) Verbal Updates:

i) **Meeting with Wiltshire Council to agree way forward (13th April)**

Vaughan confirmed that a lot of work has been undertaken since the last steering group meeting, to progress the housing topic. The outcomes of a meeting with David Way (Link Officer at Wiltshire Council) and the Housing Task Group had set the agenda for how the housing topic work was approached. Wiltshire Council have enabled

landowners of the SHELAA (Strategic Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment) sites to be considered for potential allocation through the review process.

The MWPC Clerk explained due to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) the contact details of all the landowners registered with Wiltshire Council on the SHELAA register were unable to be shared. Therefore, Wiltshire Council had contacted them all directly (4th April) and asked them to make contact with the MWPC Clerk if they were interested in putting their SHELAA or other available sites forward for consideration by the Steering Group for potential allocation in the NHP Review.

Call for Sites

Vaughan confirmed that the call for local sites was underway which will potentially enable additional smaller sites to be added to the SHELAA pool of sites.

The MWPC Clerk explained that:

- only half of the SHELAA sites had responded to date and that David Way will be notified of those who have not responded to send a reminder email with a deadline date. Any that had not responded in that period would also be contacted by the Steering Group directly by undertaking a Land Registry search to establish contact details of outstanding SHELAA sites
- It had been agreed with David Way that a 4 week period was adequate for a “Call for Sites” but the MWPC Clerk, in discussion with Vaughan, had suggested that the deadline is Sunday 5th June giving a 5 week period, as it was unlikely that action would have been taken the preceding week due to the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday and Half Term period.
- An advert calling for local sites will be placed in this week’s Melksham News as well as on social media and an email to the mailing lists of anyone who had attended a NHP event in the past, anyone who had made contact re the NHP in the past, anyone who had responded at Reg 14/16 stage and anyone who had signed up to the mailing list recently.

6. To note Community Engagement Press release on Thursday 28th April.

The MWPC Clerk reported a page advert would be in the Melksham News on 28th April 2022, with details of the extension to the Local Green Spaces consultation until 5th June, the current Call for Sites, and the new housing needs survey and heritage asset surveys going live in May. Due to the time pressures, members were seeing the proof for the first time, the day before the publication, but it was necessary to publish this week to enable the following 5 weeks for consultation and keep to the programme. The information in the press release had been agreed in principle at the last

meeting, with the Housing Needs Assessment and the Call for Sites only being finalised in the last few days.

Patsy Clover and Councillor S Crundell left the meeting at 6.55pm

7. Locality Technical Support Application - AECOM:

The MWPC Clerk confirmed that an application for Technical Support from Locality had been applied for jointly with the Deputy Town Clerk and following the interview stage a diagnostic interview had been arranged the previous Friday which Vaughan had also attended in order the shape the support provided.

- It was agreed that the Housing Needs Assessment would not contain a housing number as requested by Wiltshire Council. AECOM confirmed that this was a common request from other Local Planning Authorities. But it would concentrate on the type, tenure, and mix of housing need, including any specialist accommodation (such as for the elderly). It was also stressed that due to the variety of settlements and the town, that data sets for different locations would be very useful, especially for Shaw & Whitley who were likely to have their own Housing Allocation number as they are classed as a "Large Village"
- Due to the time constraints under the programme, AECOM were asked if they could begin work reviewing sites that they had previously looked at, and from the SHELAA pool during May, rather than waiting to commence work in June after the Call for Sites period had passed
- Time constraints to produce the Site Selection report and an SEA (Sustainable Environmental Appraisal) if required were a concern and realistically it was unlikely the Plan would be submitted at Reg 14 stage until the Autumn. The current programme showed this being submitted in July 22 to allow a year to go through the various stages for potential adoption in July 23 when the current Plan NHP#1 begins to lose its NPPF paragraph 14 protection. It was noted that the emerging NHP#2 would gather weight as it went through the process, and would hopefully have significant weight by July 23, especially if it had been through the Examiner Stage, even if at that point it had not been to a Referendum.

Vaughan explained the group were progressing as quickly as possible The housing allocation in a NDP will most likely trigger a SEA in the process. Screening needed to be carried out as fast as possible to minimise the likelihood and complexity of a SEA, which normally took place before Reg 14. This is already under discussion with David Way.

The MWPC Clerk confirmed AECOM were now making their application for the Government funding direct, as per the format for Technical Support.

8. Locality Grant Application:

- a) To note Grant Application for year ending 31/3/22 closed down at £7,440 and change of spend allocation to original application**

The MWPC Clerk explained the grant originally applied for in December 2021 had closed in March 2022. The Steering Group had the paperwork that closed down the grant in their papers, circulated before the meeting, which showed what the grant funds had been allocated against, totalling £7,440. Changes had been able to be made, for example no public drop in sessions had been held in early January due to Covid Omnicron concerns, and so the funds for that had been set aside. There were additional costs for the new website costs as this had been developed with interactive mapping. The expenditure on NHP#2 to the end of March had been £7,820.76 excluding VAT with £7,440 being set against the grant. This excluded any funding for Priority for People as the MWPC Clerk had not been entirely sure what work had been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan at closedown stage, but had a clear understanding of the work which Place had undertaken and so that had been claimed for too.

b) To note successful grant application for year ending 31/3/23 for £10,000 and the Locality Grant funding now fully utilised for NHP#2 and cost implications moving forward

The Clerk confirmed the 2022/23 Locality Grant funding application for £10,000 had been successful and the funds would be in the Town Council bank account shortly. The total quote from Place was for £21,743 excluding VAT, of which £10,000 would be covered by the grant funding. The remaining £11,743 of the quote to be funded by Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council on the agreed 70 (MTC) / 30 MWPC share. The first £5,000 of the £11,743 had been agreed at the meeting on 16th March and Place had undertaken this work; with MWPC agreeing their share of costs. Both councils to take back the further £6,743 share to their respective full council meetings for approval before the remainder of the Place quote can be approved.

The MWPC Clerk made it clear that there would be no more Locality grant funding for the NHP#2, as the two grants currently obtained £7,440 and £10,000 were at the maximum of £10,000 for a NHP (and Review) plus additional £8,000 for those in a high growth area. Therefore **ALL** future expenditure would be down to the two councils and it would be useful to have a resolution as such for future budget for the remainder of this financial year to March 2023. The MWPC Clerk and MTC Deputy Clerk had investigated National Lottery Funding, but whilst many NHP groups had been successful in the past, none had been awarded to NHP groups since 2018 when the Locality Funding came into place.

It was clarified Technical Support did not have a timescale or maximum amount limit and was not grant funding but was support funded directly by the Government; so there would be no costs for the work undertaken by AECOM.

c) To approve the next tranche of Place quotation covered by Locality grant, remainder to be funded by Melksham Town & Melksham Without Parish Councils

The MWPC Clerk reported that approval of the next tranche of the Place quotation could only be approved up to the value of the £10,000 of work (with the breakdown as indicated in the agenda papers against the quote). The

further £6,743 of work required both the councils to approve the funding of the work before the remainder of the quote can be approved.

Ongoing project and process management	£200
Steering group meeting attendances	£515
Community Communications	£225
Housing Site Selection process and plan writing	£7,700
Other policy and designation evidence and updating text and policy drafting	£1,360
TOTAL	£10,000

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve a further £10,000 of the Place quotation, as detailed above.

Melksham Town Council still to approve their share of the first £5,000 of the quote, of work up to May (MWPC already approved) and both councils to approve their share of the remaining £6,743 excluding VAT and any future expenditure on the NHP#2 to the end of March 2023.

For clarity:

Share of £ 5,000	MTC	£3,500.00	MWPC	£1,500.00
Share of £ 6,743	MTC	£4,720.10	MWPC	£2,022.90
TOTAL	£11,743	MTC £8,220.10	MWPC	£3,522.90

9. To approve latest invoices and note current financial report.

The following invoices were approved for payment:

Payee	Work undertaken	Invoice Date	Invoice Number	Net	VAT	Gross
Place Studio Ltd	New website & hosting	16/3/22	5977	£2,846.00	£550.00	£3,396.00
Colin Harrison Design Ltd	Internet domain name fees	31/3/22	3831	£106.76	£21.35	£128.11
Place Studio Ltd	Stage 1 (baseline) work as per quote	31/03/22	5983	£3,575.00	£715.00	£4,290.00
Melksham News / Wiltshire Publications	Full page advert 28 th April 22	To follow		£346.50	£69.30	£415.80

The financial statement was presented, with the costs of NHP#2 for the financial year ending 31/3/22 at £7,820.76 excluding VAT, with £7,440 funded by the first Locality Grant. The outstanding amount of £380.76 being split 70(MTC)/30(MWPC) with the two Place invoices for assistance at the Appeal Hearing being paid wholly by MWPC to date, with ongoing discussions between the two council on sharing this expense.

There was other expenditure during the financial year 22/23 for the NHP but this was for NHP#1 and previously reported.

The MWPC Clerk asked if invoices could be paid between meetings, for things that had obviously been undertaken and were not contentious; for example work Place had undertaken under the quote approval and adverts placed in the local press etc, as the group were not necessarily meeting monthly at present. This was agreed.

10. Task Groups:

a) To review group participants, agree leads, and consider how to fill any gaps in membership (and Steering Group)

The Chairman read out the list of task group members that had been indicated by the steering group, town and parish councils to date.

Task Group	Members
Housing	Councillor David Pafford (MWPC) (Lead) Councillor Richard Wood (MWPC) Councillor Alan Baines (MWPC) Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC) Councillor Pat Aves (MTC)
Local Green Space	Councillor John Glover (MWPC) (Lead) John Hamley
Heritage	Councillor Graham Ellis (MTC) Shirley McCarthy
Town Centre	Councillor Saffi Rabey MTC (Lead)

Task Group	Members
Proposed A350 Bypass	Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC) Councillor Alan Baines (MWPC) Councillor David Pafford (MWPC) John Hamley Shirley McCarthy Councillor Mike Sankey (WC)
Canal Link	Councillor Mark Harris (MWPC) Councillor Colin Goodhind (MTC)
Design Guides	

Councillor Glover suggested asking Melksham Town Council to add to their next Full Council meeting agenda a request to provide officers and to suggest anyone who may be interested in joining the Local Green Space, A350 Bypass and the Canal Link Task Groups.

Vaughan suggested the Town Council be asked to recognise that officer support would be required, but that in the initial stages there would be less involvement required. The MWPC Clerk confirmed Melksham Town Council had representatives on the Housing, Heritage and Town Centre Task Groups but it was understood that to date only Town Councillors on their Economic Development Committee had been asked to join the Task Groups, and not the Full Council.

The MWPC Clerk explained there was a need for an interactive heritage map and identified heritage assets to be run through the toolkit in May/June. Vaughan explained the heritage asset list would be a database of buildings or features which should be considered if they may be affected by planning applications. Vaughan suggested local green spaces, heritage and design are grouped together as one topic for working groups working with AECOM to produce a design guidance/code to set out the distinctive design and qualities that supported the local area.

The MWPC Clerk added “Design Codes” had been added to the request for Technical Support as previously agreed, and at the Diagnostic Interview it had been requested AECOM provide general Design Principles that can be applied to current speculative development if approved, sites allocated in NHP#2 and to shape the strategic sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan – as the sites specific are not known at this stage. They were happy to work on this format.

b) To review Workstreams and work planned

The Steering Group received the document prepared by Vaughan regarding the workstreams of the task groups.

Housing Task Group – the MWPC Clerk confirmed that at the Diagnostic Interview with AECOM they had asked if they could supplement their work with a local Housing Needs survey. AECOM were happy with this approach and cited an example in Portishead where they had successfully integrated the local survey with their report. Members will be pleased to hear that the Portishead survey had been created by Place. The survey will be in the local media in May 2022 and asked the group members to agree the circulated draft survey so it could be used as soon as possible. Members asked for amendments/explanations to be included in the survey as follows:

- for the initial closed question to be swapped with the second open question, enable the questionnaire to be fully completed.
- include a bespoke explanation at the beginning of the survey explaining why the Steering Group and town and parish council were carrying this out.
- include an explanation that Melksham has distinct approaches and requirements for housing.
- include more details about housing need.

Vaughan asked for the questions to be recorded and agreed to amend the survey. He confirmed that the initial questions in the survey were more general with more in depth questions to understand people's housing needs later in the survey.

Climate Issues Task Group – it was agreed to ask the Melksham Town Council's Environment and Climate Working Group to join the Climate Issues Task Group.

Bypass Group – Shirley agreed to join the Bypass Task Group. Vaughan suggested the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan should not become a controversial discussion document and needed to move forward to a refreshed Neighbourhood Plan as efficiently as possible. The implications of the bypass route on the assets and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan were to be noted, but the Plan would not resolve the destiny of the bypass.

It was suggested the residents from the Brunswick Park group who used to attend all the steering group meetings be approached to see if they would like to join the Local Green Spaces task group.

Councillor Wood thanked Vaughan for the document on how the strategic projects linked together.

The MWPC Clerk asked that the members consider at the next meeting

whether the Terms of Reference needed amending. Areas to be considered were who had voting rights from the Task Groups and should all members or just the lead be invited to attend all future meetings (as per NHP#1). Currently invited members of the Task Groups did not have a vote, unless they qualified already as a Steering Group member.

c) To consider request for Wilts & Berks Melksham Link project team to attend future meeting

This was discussed, and MWPC were happy for this to happen, but the town council were still to consider. This was to inform the invitation to tonight's meeting. As the Steering Group were able to consider themselves tonight, they agreed to invite the project team to the next meeting.

11. Planning Policy

- a) Wiltshire Council briefing note on latest 5 year land supply and clarification sought:** The MWPC Clerk confirmed this was important information, that influenced planning applications currently and whilst councillors would be aware, this information was for non-council members of the Steering Group; particularly the clarification sought from Wiltshire Council on how their statement affected those areas with a made Neighbourhood Plan with current paragraph 14 protection under the NPPF.¹
- b) Latest WALPA (Wiltshire Area Localism Planning Alliance) update (planned meeting with Wiltshire Council on 5th May)** The Clerk explained WALPA are an alliance of Wiltshire Neighbourhood Plan groups who are challenging Government and Wiltshire Council with regards to the changes in the NPPF paragraph 14 and the decisions made as a result. They are engaging with MPs and a further meeting has been arranged on 5th May with WALPA reps and Wiltshire Council, with questions from various NHP groups forming the agenda for the meeting.
- c) To receive update on Appeal APP/Y3940/W/21/3285428 for 20/07334/OUT Semington Road, Melksham, SN12 6EF**
The MWPC Clerk reported that no update has been received to date.
- d) To consider correspondence from Semington Parish Council (adjacent to the Plan area) on their Planning Application Policy**
Members noted this correspondence and it was noted that the 900 houses proposed as part of the Melksham Link Canal project would effectively join Semington, Melksham Without and Melksham Town.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

e) To consider policy suggestion from Melksham Without Parish Council re planting and drainage ditches on new development

The MWPC Clerk explained that on new developments trees are planted on the boundary of public open spaces which can cause problems in later years, with the adjoining housing cutting down the trees to give more light etc. In addition, difficulties were being experienced in Bowerhill where Wiltshire Council were having to remove a hedge to maintain the drainage ditch, and then reinstate the hedge in a more appropriate position. It was agreed by the Group that they wished to stop this happening in future.

f) To receive verbal update from the Clerks who are attending a Wiltshire Council Design Code session on 26th April

The MWPC Clerk confirmed this session was about informing a proposed Wiltshire Design code and was to invited NHP groups only, with a mix of those attending at different stages of Plan development and size. The session was run by Wiltshire Council and the LDA Design Consultancy. There was the opportunity for NHP groups to “road test” some proposed toolkits if the steering group were interested in taking part, alongside the tested toolkits Place already had available. In addition, groups were encouraged to put forward a list of things they think should be in a Wiltshire Design Code, (if missing from the national model) if more appropriate than a local one. This could be an opportunity to influence the Wiltshire Code with some of the Melksham aspects with wider appeal (climate change, planning out anti-social behaviour etc), and leave the Melksham NHP one just to specific distinctiveness.

The MWPC Clerk also related that developers have agreed to fund site specific design codes/masterplanning elsewhere and this could be something to bear in mind with the speculative development currently coming forward.

g) Contact with developers:

The MWPC Clerk explained the Steering Group had not met with developers once they had passed the Housing Allocation procedures for NHP#1. However, developers continued to make contact speculatively, particularly as the Call for Sites had commenced and with a public consultation for 650 dwellings on land east of Melksham currently underway, therefore sought guidance due to these recent changes.

Vaughan confirmed through the NHP site selection process, whoever had a site to be considered, would have the opportunity to engage with the process. Just because a site may be pursuing planning permission did not mean it should be excluded from the NHP site appraisal process. Vaughan suggested inviting all promoters of ‘would be’ planning applications to a ‘without prejudice’ meeting, as part of the site selection process. It was agreed the MWPC Clerk would ask for

clarification from developers whether they are promoting their sites through the NHP process or whether they were requesting a pre-app meeting with the Parish Council.

12. Next meeting:

Members discussed the workstreams, and when it was useful to next meet, and this was agreed to be the end of June, as there would be task group work to be undertaken in June, further to the evidence gathering and consultation work in May.

The next meeting of Steering Group, would be on Wednesday 29 June 2022 at 6.30 pm at Melksham Town Hall. Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillor John Glover.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed
Chair

DRAFT