



Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Meeting

Date: Wednesday 16 March 2022

Start: 6.30 pm

Present:

Steering Group Members Present

Councillor David Pafford (MWPC)

Councillor John Glover (MWPC) (Chair)

Councillor Saffi Rabey (MTC)

Councillor Mike Sankey (WC)

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)

Lorraine McRandle (MWPC)

Linda Roberts (MTC)

Patsy Clover (MTC)

Via Zoom:

Councillor Richard Wood (MWPC)

Shirley McCarthy (Environment)

John Hamley Melksham (Transport User Group)

Chris Holden (MCAP)

Vaughan Thomson (Place Studio)

James Essery (Place Studio)

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

As the Steering Group Chair Councillor Richard Wood was attending the meeting via Zoom, a Chair was sought from those attending in person.

Councillor Glover was resolved to be Chair for the meeting and welcomed everyone.

As there were 3 Melksham Without Parish Council representatives present, it was clarified Melksham Without Councillors Wood and Glover had voting rights.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simon Crundell, Melksham Town Council and Colin Harrison, Melksham Chamber.

2. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Public Participation**

Councillor Mark Harris from Melksham Without Parish Council was in attendance to observe, but did not wish to speak.

4. **To agree the Notes of the Meeting held on 9 February 2022.**

The Clerk explained Shirley McCarthy had noted an error under item 11(b) with a suggestion the sentence should read ‘...had now come to the end of the two-year protection against **the lack of 5-year land supply**’ instead of against the 5-year land supply.

Resolved: That the notes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022, with the above amendment were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. **To formally approve decisions made at Workshop on 2 March**

a) **To apply for Technical Support packages, including Housing Needs Assessment, with immediate effect**

Following discussions at the Workshop held on 2 March, it was:

Resolved: For officers to apply for technical support including a Housing Needs Assessment with immediate effect.

b) **To proceed with the next stage of the Review with immediate effect, with the knowledge that there will be a gap before Government Locality grant funding can be applied for in the next financial year. Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to fund the work in the intervening period**

Resolved: To proceed with the next stage of the Review with immediate effect with the knowledge that there will be a gap before Government grant funding can be applied for in the next financial year. Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to fund the work in the intervening period

6. **To note Technical Support package application in progress and which packages applying for.**

Following consultation with Place on the appropriate technical packages to apply for it was agreed the Steering Group apply for the following packages:

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Site Options and Assessment (will need to do a local call for sites in advance of the assessment, which Place can help with)
- Site Viability (not required at this stage)

- Environmental Impact Assessment (not required at this stage)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (if required)
- Design Codes (including environmental issues)
- Habitats Regulation Assessment (if required)
- Master planning (at a later date, to tie in with Town Council work)

The following packages are not being taken up

- Evidence base and policy production (as using Place for this)
- Plan Health Check (Place will undertake this as part of their scope of work)
- Facilitation in deprived areas (whilst there are small areas of deprivation. Melksham does not meet the relevant criteria to qualify for this)

Clarification was sought on what was included in a Housing Needs Assessment.

Vaughan explained AECOM would undertake the assessment and the Steering Group could provide a brief of what was required from the assessment, in order to make it clear. The Housing Needs Assessment is not necessarily about finding an alternative housing target for Melksham. However, if there is no Housing Needs Assessment, there will be no evidence to provide the Neighbourhood Plan with the ability to direct the type and tenure of housing which is bespoke and particular to Melksham and therefore would have to use the Wiltshire Housing Needs Assessment. The assessment would give evidence of affordable housing, affordability and those with particular needs, such as the aged population and those with additional needs.

Councillor Glover asked if the Group could use the Housing Needs Assessment produced by Wiltshire Council.

Vaughan explained Melksham did not need an alternative housing figure, a figure would be brought forward at Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan Review by Wiltshire Council and be tested on legal soundness and compliance with meeting statutory requirements. Unfortunately, the grounds for objecting to the housing figure at that stage were limited and therefore he did not see a proactive reason for getting an alternative figure and having a Housing Needs Assessment was not the tool to do it.

Shirley expressed concern the housing figure decided at a national level did not necessarily correlate with the level of housing need locally and therefore there needed to be honest dialogue with the local population in knowing what the local needs are rather than having a housing figure imposed.

Councillor Pafford noted Wiltshire Council had provided a housing figure for Melksham as part of the Local Plan, based on the Government formula, with

the housing figure subsequently being changed to a higher figure and queried whether this figure was established and beyond challenge.

Vaughan explained a line needed to be drawn between the Local Plan and its strategic allocation approach and the Neighbourhood Plan and what it is doing in terms of housing. The NPPF and Planning Policy Guidance say a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with meeting strategic housing need which is identified by the Local Plan which has not been identified yet by Wiltshire Council, which is unfortunate timing.

Wiltshire Council have also gone through a process to identify a need for Melksham and this has been seen and commented on at Regulation 18 by the Steering Group and both Councils. The housing number is not just about meeting local need, it is about meeting the share of growth of housing that the Government have set Wiltshire's requirements on. Melksham's growth is strategic and within that there is an opportunity to meet local needs.

Vaughan reiterated the assessment was a way of refining the housing mix and where it is delivered. Both councils had made responses to the Local Plan which would have been recorded and it is a case of how Wiltshire Council relate to this.

Vaughan explained AECOM would come up with a projection/percentage of what the housing requirements are in Melksham by looking at all demographic areas and would also look at affordability of houses in Melksham. There was also an opportunity to refine housing requirements to the various communities in Melksham, including the surrounding villages in the Melksham Without Parish Council area.

The Clerk to the Town Council sought clarity and asked if rather than identify a number of houses required of different types of size, tenure etc that an overall percentage of each type could be given rather than a total figure for each, which Vaughan agreed.

Chris Holden sought clarification if Trowbridge or another town pushed back on their housing requirement and Wiltshire Council passed in on to Melksham was there any recourse?

Vaughan explained there is an overall housing requirement figure for Wiltshire which is then split down to each Housing Market Area (HMAs) and then split again to the various towns/villages within the HMAs, with the Steering Group having already made their thoughts known about the proposed housing allocation figures. If there is a change to the Local Plan when it comes out at Regulation 19 stage, there may be an issue with regard to soundness and proper process and the Steering Group may want to object to it then.

However, the Steering Group have to focus on Melksham and work with the number which comes out in the end.

John Hamley queried if housing requirements were not already known, as these would be similar to other areas.

Councillor Glover explained each area had a different requirement because of their demographics.

Vaughan explained whilst there are similarities between one county and another and one town and another, there are nuances between towns and their demographics and their particular needs and this is where the Housing Needs Assessment can come in with the particular size of houses required and affordability, which may be different than elsewhere.

Shirley noted there was a high proportion of people in Melksham who are in fuel poverty and asked if the Housing Needs Assessment would provide insight into this.

Vaughan explained the assessment would not look at this, however, with the cost of fuel increasing this will affect a proportion of people and this may need consideration as part of Housing Needs Assessments in general.

Resolved: It was agreed to apply for Technical Support as identified including a Housing Needs Assessment as detailed by Vaughan and provide a Brief on what is required from the Housing Needs Assessment in order to make it clear.

As a Wiltshire Councillor, Councillor Mike Sankey abstained from voting on this item.

7. To receive report from Place Studio as to next steps and approve quotation for work package

The Clerk to Melksham Without explained there were quite a few references to Planning Class changes within the recent review documents, particularly changes to Planning Class E and therefore had provided a graph to show the relevant planning classes for clarification.

A quote had been provided by Place as follows:

Task Breakdown		
A. Project Planning & Management		
Ongoing Project and Process Management		£550
Steering Group Meeting Attendance (@10 x 2.5 hr SG Meetings)		£1718
Sub Total		£2,268
B. Community Engagement (online)		
<i>Interactive Website (Separate Quotation)</i>		<i>£0</i>
<i>Community Communications (Further)</i>		<i>£225</i>
Sub total		£225
C. Building the Evidence Bases		
Housing Site Selection Process		£6,600
Other Policy and Designation Evidence		£4,950
Sub Total		£11,550
D. Plan Writing		
Updating Text and Policy Drafting (Reg 14)		£1,650
Housing Sites Allocations		£1,100
SEA / HRA Support (Allowance)		£550
Supporting Documentation Preparation Support		£550
<i>Reg 14 Plan Desktop Publishing (Optional)</i>		<i>£1,100</i>
Sub Total		£4,950
E. Support through Formal Stages of Consultation and Examination		
Post Reg 14 Feedback Review		£1100
Reg 16 Submission Plan Revisions		£550
<i>Examination Support (Optional Allowance)</i>		<i>£1,100</i>
Sub total		£2750

It was noted that there had still not been a government announcement on whether grant funding would be available from 1 April, if there was, based on the funding for the last 4-year programme, the Steering Group would be eligible to apply for £18,000 worth of grants (£10,000 + £8,000) less the amount that has already been awarded for NHP#2 £7,440. Technical support was provided free of charge, but still a grant application type process.

It was agreed at the recent workshop that the Steering Group would proceed with the Review in the full knowledge both councils will pay costs in the meantime until grant funding could be applied for. It was clarified both Councils had already agreed to £5,000 each for the Neighbourhood Plan Review, However, if necessary, the Steering Group would have to go back to both Councils for additional funding, if necessary, if grant funding was not available.

The Clerk to Melksham Without Parish Council explained £1,850 for the new website was not covered by the current grant and had therefore been split between both Councils, therefore £8,150 was available (of the two councils' £10k allocation).

Vaughan clarified the work which was required to be undertaken as soon as possible and what could be left until later, until funding had been sought via a Locality grant if available,

Councillor Glover asked if the group were happy to proceed with a reduced overall figure of commitment subject to applying for the appropriate grant funding if available and if not to approach both councils for funding.

The Clerk to Melksham Town Council explained the review period would cover various financial years and this offered some reassurance in funds being allocated by both councils.

It was agreed to go ahead on the following basis up to May when hopefully grant funding would be available:

A. Project Planning & Management

Ongoing project and Process Management	£100.00
Steering Group Meeting Attendance (@2 x 2.5 hr SG Meetings)	£343.60

B. Community Engagement: (Would take place after May) 0

C. Building the Evidence Base £4000.00

D. Plan Writing (After May) 0

E. Support through formal stages of consultation and Examination 0

The rest of the quote to come back for approval at a later meeting, when funding had been secured from either Locality or the councils, or both.

Resolved: To seek approval for approximately £5,000 to be committed between both councils towards the costs of undertaking part of the review up until May prior to receiving any grant funding from Locality (if available).

8. To note Community Engagement press releases in March and updates to be provided at Annual Town/Parish meetings (28/29 March). To consider requesting to present at the next Area Board meeting (22 June)

The Steering Group noted the community engagement press releases which were due to be published in the Melksham News on Thurs 17th March, and Thurs 31st March.

The Clerk to Melksham Without Parish Council explained the first edition included information on what was included in the review, with the suggestion that the next edition be more about people having their say and being signposted to an interactive map to pinpoint green spaces they would like to nominate.

An update on the Neighbourhood Plan would be given at Melksham Without's Annual Parish meeting on 29th March; and at the Town Council's Annual Parish meeting on 28th March.

With regards to an update at the Area Board meeting on 22nd June it was agreed this should be whoever the Chair of the Steering Group was at that particular time, following the Neighbourhood Plan meeting in May, at which nominations would be sought for Chair and Vice Chair.

Resolved: All agreed.

9. To note new website for Review NHP#2

It was explained the new website had gone 'live' earlier that day and included the interactive Local Green spaces map, with officers currently pinpointing those which were difficult to identify. Katie had uploaded all the other from the exercise undertaken a few years ago, to populate the site for when residents looked; they would be able to comment on these. A few glitches had been noted and therefore had not been fully advertised as yet, however, this should be resolved soon and the map made available for people to pinpoint local green spaces important to them.

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

An invoice had been received from Andrea Pellegram Ltd of £600 (excluding VAT) for two lots of Neighbourhood Plan training which would

come out of grant funding.

The Clerk to Melksham Without explained at a previous meeting it had been raised that £500 (excl VAT) was to be paid to Place as they represented and gave a lot of information to help the appeal hearing at which Councillor Wood attended. However, the Steering Group had not resolved that this should be paid and therefore the cost split between both councils.

The Clerk to Melksham Without Parish Council explained the appeal was very much seen as a test case for the Neighbourhood Plan and asked if the group were happy to sign this off, rather than Melksham Without paying the whole amount, as the appeal was a test of the NHP.

The Clerk to the Town Council asked while the costs are usually share 70% Melksham Town Council and 30% Melksham Without whether this could be reversed with regards to this invoice as the site sits within the parish.

Councillor Wood explained he would be happy with a 50/50 split but this would be at the gift of the parish council and stated the outcome of the appeal affected the future of both parishes with regard to the Neighbourhood Plan, as it was seen as a test case.

It was asked if the financial report could be circulated at the next Steering Group meeting.

Resolved: To pay Andrea Pellegram's invoice of £600 excluding VAT out of the grant funding received from Locality.

With regard to the £500 excluding VAT payment to Place for work towards the appeal hearing for Melksham Without Parish Council to pay the full amount in order not to delay payment with a recommendation back to both Councils to consider their respective split with a suggestion it is split 50/50.

11. To agree date of Next Meeting of Steering Group and agree venue

Advice was sought from Vaughan on when the next meeting should take place, given the various review work which needed to be undertaken.

Vaughan suggested it would be useful in the first instance to agree who would be lead representative either individually or as a group on the key topics in order to start looking at these and to hold a Steering Group meeting after the majority of this work had been undertaken. The Lead would be the main person to feed information through on what was required and some groups may need more people than others, given the level of work required. If leads could not be found this evening, it would be useful to email the steering group seeking volunteers.

Councillor Pafford suggested it would be useful to have Members from both councils on the various topic groups, but understood this may be difficult,

however, felt it was important to have a representative from both Councils on the Housing Task Group at least.

Guidance was sought on how long the Housing Site Allocations study would take to complete.

Vaughan explained this would take around 4-5 months (Sept/Oct) to get to a Regulation 14 level of Plan and he would be working closely with David Way on a approach on housing which would be in general conformity with the Local Plan. However, the majority of site assessments and appraisals have previously been done and will only need refining.

It was asked if the Proposed Bypass group needed to wait until the final route was known.

Vaughan explained the route needed a sufficient level of clarity, therefore this group may wish wait a while, however, consideration could be given to what mitigation measures to include should it go ahead.

Task Group	Members
Housing	Councillor David Pafford (Lead) Councillor Richard Wood
Local Green Space	Councillor John Glover (Lead)
Heritage*	
Town Centre	Councillor Saffi Rabey (Lead)
Climate Issues	Shirley McCarthy (Lead)
A350 Bypass	Councillor Mark Harris John Hamley Councillor Mike Sankey
Canal Link	

*With regard to Heritage, Councillor Glover agreed to contact Peter Maslen on the Melksham & District Historical Group for a representative.

James was leading on the Heritage/Asset list and would be sending out a toolkit to assist with this, when the lead was known, which was similar to the

green spaces one. Would need to find out the important buildings in the plan area and test them against the criteria and whittle down to a smaller list. Some work as part of the first plan has already been done on this and this would be fed in

Resolved: For the Clerks of both Councils to seek representatives on the various topic task groups.

To hold a Steering Group meeting on Wednesday, 27 April at the Town Hall at 6.30pm.

12. To receive update on Appeal APP/Y3940/W/21/3285428 for 20/07334/OUT - Semington Road, Melksham, SN12 6EF

The Clerk to Melksham Without Parish Council explained there was no update following the recent Appeal Hearing, but would let members know when she heard.

Meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed
Chair