

**MINUTES**  
**BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**  
**STEERING GROUP MEETING**  
**BECKINGTON MEMORIAL HALL**  
**OCTOBER 13th 2023**

**Present:** Debs Byrne (DB), Paula Fox (PF), Jo Hole (JH), Alex Richards (AR), Sue Shipley (SS), Stuart Todd (ST), Jenny Tyler (JT), Andrew Tyler (AT), Clive Winterbourne (CW), Sue Wonnacott (SW).

**Apologies:** Sarah Ball (SB), Ben Keevil (BK). Ben Richards (BR).

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Paula Fox, Chair of the local Parish Council, welcomed attendees to the first Beckington Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) Steering Group (SG) meeting. After introductions from each of the SG volunteers, PF introduced Stuart Todd (ST) to the group. ST is the planning consultant who has been appointed and funded by a government grant to support the SG through the process to produce a neighbourhood plan. He has worked with numerous steering groups in the production of their neighbourhood plans and is also familiar with many of the planning officers at former Mendip Council and Somerset Council. ST outlined the benefits of producing a neighbourhood plan to the group.

**2. Critical Path to Plan Submission**

ST shared a critical path of activities, covering an indicative 19 months, which must be undertaken before a plan can be submitted initially to Somerset Council, then local residents, for final approval. This will effectively become the 'to do' list for the SG. The SG's first task will be to consult with the neighbourhood, which can be done via questionnaires, surveys and open days. PF confirmed that our plan will cover all residents of Beckington, Rudge and Standerwick. It should also include groups such as schools, sports clubs, churches etc. ST encouraged the SG to think creatively about how to engage with all constituents to ensure their views are heard and, where feasible, incorporated into the plan. It was noted later in the meeting that no-one from Standerwick or Rudge had yet volunteered to join the SG.

ST advised that the initial consultation with residents must be undertaken before any drafting commences to ensure residents' views and wishes are captured and reflected in the final submission. Once we have a draft plan, this will be submitted to all residents for further consultation and feedback. Final plan submission will be to Somerset Council. (Mendip, our former local council, has recently been absorbed into Somerset Council). The council will run a minimum six-week consultation following submission and will then appoint an independent examiner to test the plan against the "Basic Conditions" - the Government tests to ensure that the plan is considered robust. Much of this review will be desk based but will also include anonymous visits to the neighbourhood. Once the plan has been reviewed by the council, and any recommendations made, a referendum of all residents on the electoral roll will take place to gain their approval. If 51% of respondents approve the plan it can then be legally enforced.

ST noted that it took neighbouring Norton St Philip only seven months to win their plan approval, but this is exceptional. It was agreed that we should invite Ian ???, Chair of Norton St Philip Parish Council to our next meeting to learn from their experience.

### 3. **Areas for Inclusion in the Plan**

Housing development is likely to be of greatest interest to most residents and indeed to future developers. ST shared examples of other plans which had been successfully adopted and included issues such as the protection of green corridors and the provision of new facilities including parking, surgeries, green spaces etc. ST suggested we check with Somerset Council whether there were any pre-existing ecology surveys that have been commissioned within our parish boundaries. He offered to send through some evidence based links to information available online to give the group a start in collecting evidence based materials that could include topics other than ecology. ST also advised that there is a wealth of reference material available to the SG online, including other parish neighbourhood plans.

### 4. **Terms of Reference**

As an immediate priority and in the interests of transparency, ST advised the SG to draw up Terms of Reference. He agreed to provide three examples as a template. JH volunteered to produce a first draft of these terms and to circulate them before the next SG meeting.

### 5. **Communication**

It was agreed that a WhatsApp group of all SG members would be useful for communication and decision making. AR agreed to set this up after the meeting. Each member present provided their email address and mobile phone number to facilitate this. AR and SW have since agreed to chase up those volunteers who were unable to attend for their contact details.

### 6. **Next Steps**

PF asked the group to consider how they might best leverage their skills and expertise in developing the plan and the roles they might assume in the process. These skills should be shared at our next meeting when the SG need to agree, inter alia, who will chair meetings and who will be secretary. SS volunteered to take minutes of the inaugural meeting. AR agreed to book a venue for the next meeting.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday October 26<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 6pm.

**Venue:** The Woolpack, Beckington.