

MINUTES
BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
STEERING GROUP MEETING
9 April 2025

Present:

Clive Winterbourne (CW) Meeting Chair, Georgina Fletcher (GF), Paula Fox (PF), Jo Hole (JH)

Apologies: Debs Byrne (DB), Alex Richards (AR), Ben Richards (BR)

1. **Minutes of Last Meeting.** The minutes of the meeting on 27 February 2025 were approved, following one amendment.
2. **Website.** It was noted that SG members Laura Parry (LP) and GF are not featured on the NP website.
3. **Update to Parish Council**
BR submitted an update to the Parish Council (PC) meeting on 8 April that was read out by CW:
 - The residents' housing survey is underway. Surveys delivered to all households over the period 19-21 March. The deadline for responses is Friday 2 May, representing a 6-week consultation period.
 - We have posted updates on our website, and answered questions on the Beckington Facebook page, by email and by telephone. We have also set up a dedicated Facebook page to assist with communication.
 - We are aware that there is a Somerset Council Planning Committee – East meeting on Tuesday 6 May.
 - On 21 March, Paul Russell (PR) (PC Clerk) and BR had a video call with AECOM to discuss the support that they will provide for Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBDP) to assist production of the NP.
 - We are awaiting feedback from Brodie Planning Associates on:
 - An updated Housing Background Paper.
 - Our Vision and Objectives.
 - We await delivery of Local Green Space and Views Assessments from Open Plan.
 - We now need to think about engaging formally with Somerset Council to inform them of how we have progressed and begin discussion about whether/when they will undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screenings.
4. **Stuart Todd (ST) NP Planning Consultant call 1 pm April 9 with PF**
BR has asked PF to call ST in his absence. The SG discussed some of the points in the call including:
 - Updated ST on status during his period of sick leave.
 - Consultation Statement: ST to send links to some good examples.
 - Preferred site consultation process: ST said it was fine for the SG to have discussed putting all 12 sites into the consultation for reasons of democracy – that it is best to be **transparent** but, in his opinion, the advice from Brodie Planning to consult on the shortlist

of five sites was correct and the SG was correct to follow that professional advice. ST stated that all the NPs he had worked on had a longer list of sites initially and reduced that to a shorter list for consultation. ST stated that he has never known a SG not to follow this process.

- The meeting asked to move to the agreed next steps with ST rather than a full update on the call. These were:
 - The time agreed with ST is nearly used so it was agreed to reengage with a new agreement. Suggested tasks over the next 12 months might be SG NP process guidance and handling responses to the Regulation 14 consultation.
 - It was agreed to approve projected costs in the region of £1,100 to £1,500.

5. **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

- ST advised that these may be available via AECOM as technical packages if the Locality programme starts again. The decision has been delayed until July 2025. There is an option to pay AECOM or other companies to undertake SEAs and HRAs.
- The Local Planning Authority (LPA) will undertake screening to decide whether the NP needs a SEA and/or an HRA.
- It was agreed that PR to apply to Locality for the SEA and HRA technical packages so they have the application.
- ST advised the SG to contact the LPA to ask when they would do the SEA and HRA screening.

6. **Topography Character Assessment**

- Following the withdrawal of The Landscape Workshop due to health and capacity issues it was agreed that other landscape professionals would be approached for fee proposals and availability. These to include the company Adam Boyden recommended, MacGregor Smith and Tirwel.
- This would cost more than the agreed budget for £1,600 so it was agreed to ask the PC to budget an additional £1,900 for this piece of work.

7. **Character Assessment (CA) Chapters**

Postponed to next SG meeting.

8. **Rudge consultation**

- It was agreed that given the low levels of engagement of residents of Rudge that it might be a good idea to have a separate consultation in the Full Moon, Rudge. It was noted that residents from Rudge would have a further opportunity to voice their views at the public consultation planned for 15 May 2025 (see item 10).
- The key issues raised in the 2024 NP survey (albeit based on a small sample) were support for provision of a traveller site and opposition to this. ST advised in an email on February 12th that such sites are considered, in planning, to be a matter for strategic planning and there are certain duties placed on local planning authorities to consider provision in Local Plans. It is therefore in his experience not considered in Neighbourhood Plans.
- ST advised that the SG may want a formal view from Somerset LPA so that the SG has a response to the comments received.

- ST further advised that with regard to protecting land from unauthorised encampments, these typically take place outside of the planning world, but should there be any planning applications for permanent sites, planning policies which apply to the area of land within which the site sits or is located would apply, whether they are in a Neighbourhood Plan or the Local Plan, or the NPPF.
- GF volunteered to lead on the Rudge consultation and keep the SG informed.
- CW offered to contact Shannon Brooke (SB) on detailed work done on district traveller site provision as might be useful.

9. **Brodie Planning Associates**

It was agreed to ask BR to check status on the outstanding and overdue Housing Background Report and the Vision and Objectives work.

10. **Public consultation**

- Steve Kemp (SK) of Open Plan plans to submit draft Views and Local Green Space Assessments at the end of April / start of May.
- The Mendip District Council Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) identified three distinct character areas in the Conservation Area. The AECOM Design Guidance team agreed with these and identified additional character areas. It was agreed that these character areas identified by independent professionals would be the ones used in the NP Character Assessment.
- It was agreed that there will be a public consultation on these three pieces of work in the hall on May 15th. The date was checked to make sure it does not fall in a school holiday. It was agreed that the availability of other members of the SG should be checked and in the meantime PR to be asked to provisionally book the main hall.
- It was agreed that an invitation will be hand delivered to every household in the parish. Posters will be put up.
- SK to be invited to attend and present.

11. **How communicate results of site survey**

- The Network deadlines to be checked.
- It was discussed that the results would be put on the NP website and possibly on Facebook as well.
- The responses to be analysed by independent consultant Brodie Planning not the SG so the timing of when the results will be available is currently unknown.

12. **Finances**

Any expenses from the February 17th consultation to be submitted to PR. VAT receipts required where appropriate.

13. **AOB**

- Date and venue for next meeting: Proposed 7 pm Thursday May 1st.