

MINUTES
BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
STEERING GROUP MEETING
8 May 2024

Present:

Chair - Sue Shipley (SS)

Vice Chair - Sue Wonnacott (SW)

Project Planning - Mel Usher (MU)

Finance - Andrew Tyler (AT)

External Communications - Paula Fox (PF), Jo Hole (JH), Jennie Tyler (JT)

Internal Communications and Website - Alex Richards (AR)

Secretary - Ben Richards (BR)

Visitor: Jo Milling (JM), Senior Planning Officer, Somerset Council (Agenda Item 7)

Apologies: Sarah Ball (SB), Debs Byrne (DB), Laura Parry (LP), Clive Winterbourne (CW)

1. Minutes of last meeting

- An incorrect entry concerning a possible Parish Council open day was removed.
- Agenda Item 5 - PF had provided headline feedback from the consultation exercises at the launch event. It was agreed that the feedback could be shared with the AECOM Design Code team. The minutes would be updated. **Action: BR**
- The minutes were approved, subject to the amendments above.

2. Actions arising from last meeting

- Consultation and Engagement. See Item 4.
- PF confirmed she had circulated a note on the Design Codes meeting with AECOM on 11 March. **Afternote.** This is on the G Drive and PF has resent to SG members by email.

3. Residents' Survey

- The Survey Analysis sub-group had met; analysis of results and identification of themes is ongoing. Initial results are due by 24 May. **Action: LP, PF, SW, MU, SS, BR**
- JT is holding the library of paper survey responses. These will be retained for now, with a decision on destruction taken later. **Action: AR to pass any paper copies he is holding to JT.**

4. Stakeholder Engagement

- Consultation and Engagement Plan. In the absence of further comment, LP is requested to circulate an updated version for approval at the next meeting. It was agreed that the final version could be published on the NPSG website. **Action: LP.**
- Local Businesses. Work was ongoing to develop a plan for once the survey results were in. The working group had been formed but was yet to meet. **Action: AT, LP, BR, SS, JT**
- Schools. In the absence of SB, MU reported that engagement with the schools had begun.
- Surgery. MU had written to the Surgery and was awaiting a response.

5. Comms Proposal

- JT had circulated a proposal for an event to bring clubs/societies and independent businesses together with the objectives of:

- Sharing the draft vision and aim of the NP and themes emerging from the survey analysis.
- Engagement with residents and non-commercial stakeholders.
- The proposal was fully supported as a good way to communicate what we are doing with the survey and demonstrate that comments and views will be addressed (either represented in the NP or passed to the PC or other bodies for information). It would also act as an opportunity to bring the village together and allow clubs and societies to promote themselves in a 'freshers fair' format.
- 15 September was identified as a possible date.
- A working group would be required to organise the event.

6. Evidence Generation and Sources

- Housing Needs Analysis (HNA). SS reported that the draft HNA was expected from AECOM in the first two weeks of June.
- Design Code (DC). PF was in touch with AECOM. A draft was expected in the next two weeks. The target date for completed work to be submitted to Locality was 16 August. It was agreed that PF would update the AECOM DC team with emerging survey analysis, particularly Questions 1-2 (Living in the Parish) and 23-24 (Natural Environment and Green Spaces) at/by the end of May. PF agreed to produce a file-note of her telephone call with AECOM on 8 May.

Action: PF

- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). The LCA working group (SW, PF, CW, DB) was investigating themes and guidelines that might be included in the NP, based on policy guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and Natural England documents. The working group had asked Somerset Council for any relevant policy documents and would also consult on how Norton St Philip approached Green Spaces in their plan. The issue of whether to engage an external consultant to produce a bespoke LCA was discussed. PF had previously advised that various options were available, but that the cost would have to be met from the existing funding allocation; a separate grant was not available. AT reported that, following the last meeting, he had been in touch with MacGregor Smith in Bath, who produced the Mendip LCA in 2020 and might be able to produce a Beckington version. He provided contact details for the working group to follow up. It was agreed that the working group would continue to scope the options and submit recommendations to the next meeting.

Action: SW, PF, CW, DB

7. Jo Milling - Somerset Council Planning Department

- SS introduced Jo Milling (JM) from Somerset Council who had kindly agreed to attend and provide advice on the support available from the Council and guidance on NP content and production. In response to questions, she provided the following information:
- Somerset Council can assist with questions regarding legislation and precedent.
- The Council website contains an Evidence Base and Monitoring section that contains useful reference material on environmental, housing and communities and other issues that will be relevant to our NP.
- The Planning Department has access to mapping services that can be provided to us.
- The Council is producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to provide a single vision for nature recovery and set out local priorities and opportunities for nature. Work will map the locations of the County's most precious habitats and wildlife. The expected completion date is Autumn 2024.

- JM recommended differentiating between wider “Landscape” considerations and any specific sites that could be included in the NP. It is a community decision on what is important and should be considered for formal designation as “Local Green Space”. But they should be “demonstrably special” and be in line with the criteria set out in NPPF. They should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land around a settlement. Footpaths are not generally accepted as green spaces, but there are examples of where this has occurred. The NP can make recommendations and express opinion on where and how development should take place and which type of landscape and settlement character should be preserved. This is probably best done in a Character Assessment (see the Norton St Philip example).
- The Open Space Audit (2021) provides a catalogue of greenspaces in the towns, villages and hamlets of the District and will provide a baseline for the next Local Plan.
- The threshold for affordable housing is nine units. In other words, developers are only required to comply with affordable housing obligations on sites of 10 houses or more.
- Infrastructure concerns (such as schools, education, medical care) should be included in the NP.
- Concerns over utilities should be included but should be specific in nature. JM recommended that key stakeholders (including Wessex Water) should be consulted.
- JM advised that although there was no existing allocation for new houses in Beckington, national guidance states that there must be an allocation. A NP can suggest a number for the five year period that it covers, but this is a matter for the community, and it can be divisive.

8. Finance

- AT updated the meeting. There was no significant change from the last meeting.
- We await a Locality decision on grant allocation for this FY.
- It is understood that the Parish Council has allocated £3,000 to the NP, but that there is unlikely to be any formal confirmation of this.

9. Project Plan

- MU had provided a written update in advance of the meeting.
- He noted that the Somerset Council evidence library would be particularly relevant to Stages 2.1 and 2.2 of the Project Plan (*understanding, collating and reviewing written strategic and local evidence*). AR agreed to produce a document listing the key references available from Somerset Council and other authorities / stakeholders. **Action: AR**
- MU recommended that a future meeting would need to discuss whether the NP should include any site selection recommendations, taking into account the findings of the survey and the awaited draft HNA.

10. Any Other Business

- It was noted that we need to have a clear policy on where and how data will be retained once the NPSG work is completed.
- There had been 67 entries for the survey prize draw. SS conducted the draw, witnessed by the SG. The winner will be contacted. Action: BR

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 4 June at 7pm

Venue: Clifford House