

MINUTES
BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
STEERING GROUP MEETING
14 August 2024

Present:

Chair - Sue Shipley (SS)
External Communications – Debs Byrne (DB), Jennie Tyler (JT), Clive Winterbourne (CW)
Project Plan - Mel Usher (MU)
Finance - Andrew Tyler (AT)
Secretary - Ben Richards (BR)

Apologies: Sarah Ball (SB), Paula Fox (PF), Jo Hole (JH), Laura Parry (LP), Alex Richards (AR)

1. Minutes of last meeting

- 10 July 2024 - Approved

2. Actions arising

- Cllr Adam Boyden (Frome North) and Dawn Denton had been invited but were unable to attend due to prior commitments. The invitations would be re-issued. **Action - CW**
- Declarations of Interest. These were now ready for publication on the website. **Action - AR**
- Key Reference Documents. AR had completed the review and had posted a document on the G Drive with hyperlinks and an explanation of each document.
- Archiving. BR informed the group that the plan for archiving was to copy the contents of the G Drive onto a memory stick or equivalent once the Neighbourhood Plan was complete and hand over to the Parish Council for their records.

3. Residents' Survey

- The summary document containing the key findings of the residents' survey had been distributed to all households and posted on the website.
- The full document was now in final draft (v6). It was agreed that it would also be published on the website following a final opportunity for comment and final checks to ensure that no comment or opinion could be linked to individuals. The deadline for this would be Sun 18 Aug. **Action - All (final review), AR (publication).**
- The Memorial Hall Committee had requested a bespoke summary of comments and opinion relating to the Memorial Hall and Playing Field. This would be provided. **Action - BR**
- Having read the survey summary, a Great Dunns Close resident had volunteered to initiate a village litter pick and verge tidy and asked to be referred to the PC, which had been done. SS recommended he also be introduced to John and Maria Beavan who have previously run litter picks in the village. **Action - CW/DB**

4. Housing, Call for Sites process and timeline

- The SG noted conflicting views on a Call for Sites. Two independent advisors had advised this must be a separate exercise from the Mendip Call for Sites in September 2023 as it is for a different purpose and needs to be up to date to avoid appeals from new potential developers or landowners that the process was unfair. SS and PF would seek the views of Somerset Council's Principal Planning Policy Officer, André Sestini, during a meeting planned for 20 August. **Action - SS, PF**
- It was noted that there continues to be much speculation concerning Somerset Council's planning timeline and decisions, notably the allocation of housing numbers. It was agreed that an official view should be sought directly from the Council. **Action - PF**
- The SG noted that conducting a fresh Call for Sites would lengthen the NP production process but agreed that the most important outcome was a NP that was evidence-based and would satisfy the requirements of the Planning Inspectorate.
- It was further noted that site allocation could be a very divisive process. To avoid accusations of bias, it was agreed that the process would be best conducted by an independent consultant with the relevant expertise. Two potential consultants had been identified: one of which is due to meet with SS and PF on 20 August to discuss their availability, a work plan and timeline. Input from AECOM would also be sought re timings for the technical assessment element. **Action - SS, PF**
- The PC had received an email from a resident asking for confirmation of if, how and when consultations would take place with Beckington parishioners on their preferred sites for future development. A response will be drafted once we have finalised an agreed process. **Action - SS.**
- **Decision** – The methodology and timeline for the Call for Sites process would be confirmed following the meetings on 20 August and further consultation with AECOM and Somerset Council (AS).

5. Technical Support

- **Design Codes.** AECOM had provided the final draft of the document that had been circulated for comment. PF was replying on behalf of the SG. AECOM is due to submit the final document for approval by Locality on 16 August. All agreed it was an excellent report.
- **Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).** The LCA working group had met and had arranged for a photographer to visit on 19 August to take photographs of the views identified in the Survey. A consultant has been identified to complete the LCA and is available to start work in September. A decision on whether a full LCA is required or if the work should be limited to a Protected Views Survey will be made after the initial meeting in Beckington. **Action - LCA working group**
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).** ST had advised the SG that this would be required as part of the site assessment process. The report will be delivered by Locality (likely AECOM) and will not incur cost. SS agreed to speak to Dave Chapman at Locality to initiate the work. **Action - SS**

6. Stakeholder Engagement (Local Businesses)

- The working group met on 22 July and will contact local businesses directly to ask them if they wish to comment on land use and planning from a business perspective. **Action - AT**

7. Communications

- It was agreed that clear and accurate communication to residents was vital to maintain interest and trust in the process.
- An article will be produced for the next edition of Network magazine (deadline 20 August). AT will circulate a draft. The article will be reproduced on our website. **Action - AT/SS**
- The SG noted that some residents appeared to believe that the SG was involved in discussions over the future of the Baptist Chapel. This is not the case – that issue is being dealt with by the Parish Council and requires clarification.

8. Finance

- AT reported that he was waiting for final confirmation from the PC concerning when the second Locality grant would be paid into our account, which had been approved. On current planning, there seemed to be sufficient funds for the LCA and Call for Sites consultancy work (subject to finalising costs with consultants) and a line set aside for events and printing. AT will produce a detailed spend forecast based on the revised Project Plan for the next meeting. **Action - AT**

9. Project Plan

- MU outlined progress against Stage 2 of the Project Plan (Identifying Issues), noting that some tasks were not yet complete.
 - 2.1 Understanding the existing strategic (wider than parish) written evidence base. **(Afternote: completed by AR)**
 - 2.2 Understanding the existing local written evidence base: reviewing evidence base. **(Afternote: needs clarification as to whether this has been done)**
 - 2.9 Business views sought.
 - 2.10 Consider local call for sites and identify process.
- Stage 3 (Aims, Vision and Objectives) would begin in September with the production of the draft Aims and Vision section for the NP, drawing on the findings of the Survey, the Housing Needs Assessment Report and Design Code.
- It was agreed that, as we now reach the point of drafting the NP document, it would be useful to have a lead editor to maintain consistency and style. **Action - SS to seek a volunteer.**

10. AOB

- **Date of next meeting.** 7pm Wednesday 18 September. New venue to be confirmed.
- There is to be an informal Parish Council meeting at 6pm on 22 August to discuss the public gathering on 3 September re housing development. BR and SS agreed to attend on 22 August. DB will attend on 3 September.