

**MINUTES**  
**BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**  
**STEERING GROUP MEETING**  
**13 January 2025**

**Present:**

Ben Richards (BR), Georgina Fletcher (GF), Paula Fox (PF), Alex Richards (AR), Clive Winterbourne (CW), Laura Parry (LP)

**Apologies:** Debs Byrne (DB), Jo Hole (JH)

**In attendance:** Rory Ingleby-Mackenzie (RI-M), Wendy Hopkins (WH)

1. **Introductions.** BR welcomed RI-M from Beckington Parish Council and WH from Brodie Consulting.
2. **Minutes of Last Meeting.** The minutes of the meeting on 17 December 2024 were approved, following one amendment. **Action: BR to provide AR with approved copy for publication.**
3. **Actions arising from previous minutes**
  - AR provided members with revised login details for the shared drive. He is available to assist with any issues.
  - BR stated that the other actions would be dealt with during the meeting:
    - a. Somerset Council development targets.
    - b. Call for sites.
    - c. Local Green Space and Views assessments. (CW/DB)
    - d. Vision and Objectives, plan outline consultation. (BR)

**Afternote:** *There was insufficient time to discuss items c and d. The highlighted leads are requested to update the group by WhatsApp.*

4. **Call for Sites**

- BR introduced the discussion on call for sites with an update on numbers. He noted Councillor Adam Boyden's blog that contains the following information:
  - The updated National Planning Policy Framework has revised policies that increase the weight given to the benefit of housing development and has changed the way a Council's housing requirement is set. This has increased Somerset's requirement by 41%, from 2,669 homes a year to 3,769 homes a year.
  - As a result, Somerset Council can only demonstrate 2.55 years housing supply (within the former Mendip area this is now 2.2 years housing supply), rather than 5 years, so the 'tilted balance' set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF applies. This means that when planning applications for housing are being decided, there is a 'presumption in favour' of approval for housing development, unless 'significant and demonstrable harm' can be demonstrated.
- PF noted that Somerset Council will be conducting its own call for sites process.
- WH advised that, in the absence of an allocation from Somerset Council, there was nothing stopping the SG entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council

over numbers or sites. **Action: PF to seek clarification from Somerset Council (André Sestini) and request a housing requirement or indicative figure for planning purposes.**

- WH had provided the SG with draft reports before the meeting and requested points of clarification and factual corrections. The SG had spent one hour reading through. 13 sites had been considered and assigned a category of suitability for development (Inappropriate/significant constraints/minor constraints/unconstrained).
- The draft reports indicated that, in general, potential sites in the East of Beckington had fewer issues than sites in the West. WH drew attention to road noise – a material planning consideration. She noted that it did not seem to have featured significantly in previous consideration of sites and recommended that the NP should include a policy to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures to reduce mitigate noise and retain the rural character of the settlement are included in proposals by developers. This would be particularly relevant to any sites adjoining the A36/A361.
- WH noted that some sites may require further consultation, particularly where they impact the Conservation Area.
- The SG welcomed the level of detail contained in each report and requested that WH finalise the reports and submit them to the SG.

5. **Next Steps.** The SG agreed the following:

- Submission. The reports will be submitted to the Parish Council on receipt. This will enable the PC to draw on relevant reports when responding to planning applications before the NP has been completed. WH stressed that the reports will have no weight in the balance of decision making until they have been formally submitted for examination (as part of the NP). They could, however, form part of an evidence base.
- Consultation. A village consultation exercise will be conducted to identify residents' preferences. The SG will determine which sites are put forward and it was agreed that this was likely to be those sites that were assessed to be "unconstrained" or have "minor constraints". The consultation will be introduced at the public meeting on 30 January and be conducted in February.
- Draft Plan. It was agreed that writing the draft NP will be conducted in parallel with the consultation process, with a target completion date of the end of February.
  - WH advised the SG that her commitments meant that she would not be able to draft the plan. She offered to review the representation made on behalf of the PC to the Tower Hill application and undertake the written part of the consultation on the preferred housing sites. Her current work includes attending the meeting on the 30th January and reviewing and disseminating the responses received. Following discussion, the SG agreed that the most effective way to deliver a NP in the timeframe required would be for the Parish Clerk to draft it with assistance from WH and Stuart Todd depending on his availability.

**Afternote:** *Since the meeting WH has confirmed that she is able to assist further by reviewing the draft NP in early March with up to three days work. A funding request has been submitted to the PC for approval.*

- PF noted that a Locality technical package (Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBPD)) might be available to assist with finalising the plan and that she would investigate this. **Action: PF to investigate.**

**Afternote:** *PF has requested the Parish Clerk to apply for the package.*

- Village Consultation, 30 January.

- It was agreed that the consultation event on 30 January will have the following aims:
  - Inform and consult residents on the vision, aims, objectives and content of the draft NP.
  - Inform residents about how and when the consultation exercise on site preferences will take place.
- It was agreed that PF will lead the event, supported by WH to answer questions on the Call for Sites.
- It was agreed that AR and LP would produce messages for the SG website and village Facebook page. PF would consult DB about the production of posters. **Action: AR LP, PF, DB**

**Afternote:** *This event has now been postponed until 17 February.*

## 6. AOB

- Date and venue for next meeting. tbc

**Afternote:** *Subsequently arranged for 10 February 2025.*