

MINUTES
BECKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
EXTRAORDINARY STEERING GROUP MEETING
19 June 2024

Present:

Chair - Sue Shipley (SS)

Vice Chair - Sue Wonnacott (SW)

External Communications - Sarah Ball (SB), Laura Parry (LP), Clive Winterbourne (CW)

Design Codes and LCA – Paula Fox (PF)

Secretary - Ben Richards (BR)

Apologies: Debs Byrne (DB), Jo Hole (JH), Alex Richards (AR), Andrew Tyler (AT), Jennie Tyler (JT), Mel Usher (MU)

Purpose

1. SS explained that the purpose of the meeting was to consider whether housing should become the main focus of the NP, noting that:

- The Selwood Garden Village proposal for 1500 homes on the outskirts of Frome (with a decision expected from Somerset Council later this year) includes a proposal for changes to the Beckington and White Row roundabouts to accommodate increased traffic. The changes could mean that Highways England might not object to further development in Beckington .
- Cotswold Homes is presently conducting a pre-application consultation for 20 new homes on the former Redrow2 site to the East of Great Dunns Close. A formal planning application is expected in July. The details had been circulated to all SG members.
- The Parish Council has received an email from Shannon Brooke expressing her concerns that the NPSG is not planning to include site recommendations as part of the NP and that, as a consequence, Beckington could be vulnerable to further development.

2. The decision facing the SG was whether we amend our approach to the NP. SS had received input from AT and MU and this had been made available to the SG.

Parish Council Perspective

3. PF outlined the perspective of the Parish Council.

- The Cotswold Homes proposal for the former Redrow2 site had not been formally submitted for consideration. However, the company had requested an informal consultation. This was a common procedure. The PC believed that it would be appropriate and useful for a NPSG representative to attend the consultation.
- It was important to understand that the 505 additional homes draft allocation by Somerset Council following the Judicial Review in 2022 are a historical shortfall and are separate to any future allocation that Somerset Council may decide. A Call for Sites procedure that took place in 2023 included 9 sites in Beckington. The draft proposal does not include any of the Beckington sites.
- As for any future requirement, Somerset Council is required to identify potential sites to meet its 5 Year Housing Supply requirement. It has yet to do this. PF had been informed by the Principal Planning Officer (Andre Sestini) that the Selwood Garden Village proposal for 1500 homes (delivering 200-300 homes per year over 5 years) would not fill the 5 year requirement.

- Revised NPPF guidance in January 2024 states that a NP that is less than five years old should not be ignored if the NP allocates site(s) to “meet its identified housing requirement”.

4. PF had spoken to Stuart Todd , Wendy Hopkins (Planning Consultant who had advised the NPSG of Pebworth), and the Chair of Woodcote NPSG . CW had also spoken to George Hitchens (Chair of Norton St Philip NPSG). All had provided advice on how our NP might address the lack of a 5 Year housing supply figure and what had worked well in their own cases.

Discussion

5. The SG noted that:

- The 505 additional homes in the draft allocation by Somerset Council following the Judicial Review in 2022 are a historical shortfall and are separate to any future allocation that Somerset Council may decide.
- There was currently no information on whether Beckington would be required to have new development and in what numbers. However, if the NP wished to influence site selection, it must state a preference backed up by evidence.
- The experience of other villages, similar to Beckington, indicated that including site selection in the NP was strongly recommended if we wanted to influence planning decisions.
- It was also recognised that soliciting views on site selection can be divisive.

6. SS proposed three options:

- (1) Do nothing and stick to the original plan for the NP.
- (2) Initiate our own call for sites, consult residents and make recommendations based on their views.
- (3) Consult on the 9 existing sites and make recommendations based on residents’ views.

7. PF noted that Stuart Todd (ST) had advised that the site selection process and consultation with residents could not simply be a re-run of previous survey methodology on the basis of the previously identified 9 sites. It would need to be robust to prevent legal challenges from landowners and developers. We would need to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment, involving a 5-week consultation period.

8. It was decided that:

- Whether to focus the NP on housing, including site selection, needed a decision by the full SG at its next meeting. **Action: All**
- SW would attend the Cotswold Homes informal consultation.
Afternote: SW is now unable to attend. An alternative representative is being sought.
- A notice would be placed on the NP website, with information on the Cotswold Homes proposal and their consultation period. The aim was to ensure that everyone in Beckington was aware that they had the opportunity to comment ahead of any formal application. To maximise reach, the notice would be repeated on the Beckington Facebook page and in the next NPSG update in Network **Action: BR (website, Facebook), SS (Network)**
- As the email from Shannon Brooke had been addressed to the PC, it was up to them to respond (not the NPSG). **Action: PF to inform PC**

Other issues

9. PF advised that she is assembling the bid for the additional £10K grant from Locality. She was including potential LCA work and costs associated with the proposed event in September. She asked for any other bids as soon as possible. It was agreed that PF should submit the bid to Locality direct ahead of the next meeting. **Action: PF**

10. SS stated that, although the idea for the September event was a very good one, she was concerned that it would require a considerable effort to organise and run and this needed to be balanced against the availability of SG members, many of whom had many other commitments. She was concerned that we risked over-extending ourselves into areas that (although of considerable wider benefit) were not strictly relevant to the production of the NP. A Go/No Go decision would be required at the next meeting. **Action: All**

11. PF raised the future of the Baptist Church on Frome Road, which was expected to go on the market in the near future. There might be an opportunity for the village to acquire the property. The PC was considering the issue and looking for volunteers to form a working group. **Information only.**

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 10 July at 7pm