



Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Meeting

1, Swift Way, Bowerhill Industrial Estate,
Melksham, SN12 6GX

Date: Wednesday 27th February 2019

Start: 6pm

Present

Steering Group Members

i. Councillors

Cllr. Richard Wood (MWPC)
Cllr. John Glover (MWPC)
Cllr. Tony Watts (MTC)
Cllr. Pat Aves (MTC)
Cllr. Phil Alford (WC)

ii. Community Representatives

Shirley McCarthy (Environment)
Mike Sankey (Community)
Colin Goodhind (MCAP)
Colin Harrison (Chamber)
Rolf Brindle (Transport)

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)
Jo Eccleston (MWPC)
Lorraine McRandle (MTC)
Linda Roberts (MTC)

1. Welcome & apologies:

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures as this was a new meeting venue.

No apologies had been received and Cllr. Pat Aves represented the Town Council in the absence of Cllr. Richard Wiltshire.

2. Declaration of Interests

There is a standing declaration of interest in MCAP from Shirley McCarthy and from Teresa Strange as a Trustee for Young Melksham.

3. Public Participation:

Cllr. Adrienne Westbrook (MTC), who is not a member of the Steering Group but wished to speak in public participation, expressed her opinion that although she hadn't actually seen the Draft Neighbourhood Plan, it needed a really strong section emphasising the

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requirement for Town Centre regeneration. She stated that she had had many conversations with the new Town Clerk about this and although she had not spoken to her fellow Town Councillors on this matter, she wished to put forward a proposal to defer the timescale of submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to enable the Town Council to produce more detailed information to be included in the plan. In her opinion without more emphasis on Town Centre regeneration she felt the Town Council would not support the Neighbourhood Plan going out to public consultation.

5. **Minutes of the last meeting:**

- a) **Agree minutes of meeting held 30th January 2019:** MWPC Clerk advised that the officers from both Councils typed up the minutes from alternate meetings and that they emailed each other to check the draft minutes. Track changes had been made to the draft minutes, but there had been some confusion as to the correct version presented to this evening's meeting. Therefore, there were a couple of amendments to be made before the minutes could be approved as follows:

From Page 2 (item 6) – Housing Needs Assessment (HNA): The Steering Group had resolved at the previous meeting not to use the HNA as it had been produced too late for use by AECOM, and Wiltshire Council had subsequently provided a housing needs requirement figure for the Plan area. This resolution was reflected in the track changes.

From Page 4 (item 8d) – Review Triggers: The Steering Group had agreed at the previous meeting that a review period was required, such as 5 years from adoption of the Plan, at the Local Plan Review or a significant event, and the MTC Clerk had advised that she had some relevant wording that could be used from the Calne Neighbourhood Plan. This was reflected in the track changes.

From Page 5 (item 8e) – Submission of draft Plan to Wiltshire Council for SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) and HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment) Screening: The wording in the tracked changed version was "It was explained we could submit the draft Plan at a relatively early stage to Wiltshire Council as the draft is finalised; it was likely to require an SEA as the Plan will have a Housing Site Allocation – Resolved: To submit to Wiltshire Council the draft Plan to consider if SEA or HRA screening is required".

Resolved: *The minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2019 were formally approved and signed as an accurate record by the Chairman with the inclusion of the track changes as listed.*

- b) **Matters Arising:** *From 5c – Funding from Locality:* The MWPC Clerk advised that she had had a couple of conversations with Locality following the Steering Group not accepting the Housing Needs Assessment produced by AECOM and had expressed disappointment and concern that there was no indication of whether future funding was available. She explained that if further funding was not available this had a major impact on the budgets of town and parish councils. She had subsequently received confirmation from Locality that further technical support and funding would be available as of the 1st April 2019. Additionally, the Steering Group could request a free independent health check of the Plan from a company other than AECOM, and this could be done prior to going out to public consultation under Regulation 14.

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6. Finance Report

a) Invoices for Payment:

- i) Lemon Gazelle (Invoice No 211 for £800) for Draft Statement of Basic Conditions and Draft Statement of Community Involvement. **Resolved:** Invoice number 211 for £800 was approved for payment.
- ii) Lemon Gazelle (Invoice No 216 for £775) for Feedback Meeting, Draft Plan and Supporting Documents. **Resolved:** Invoice number 216 for £775 was approved for payment.

- b) **Current Budget:** The current expenditure to date was £25,414.86; £15,359.86 from the joint Melksham Town and Melksham Without budget and £3,550 from grant funding for 2018/19. Members reviewed documentation from Lemon Gazelle with regard to the work to be undertaken and invoiced by them in this current funding year, up to 31st March 2019.

7. Draft Policy Document:

- a) **Review of Policy Document:** The MWPC Clerk advised that, as requested, Lemon Gazelle had rearranged the information in the draft Plan to achieve a better flow. She felt that the only information that was missing now was some background information on housing site allocation, a section on town regeneration and background evidence with regard to renewable energy. It was agreed that this had improved the document and that photos, graphics and maps would further enhance its readability for the general public when it goes out for public consultation.

Town Council members expressed concern with regard to the policies covering the expansion and improvement of retail experience in the Town. The MTC Clerk felt, drawing on her experience from the Calne Neighbourhood Plan, that the Town Centre is not covered robustly enough in the Plan. She read out the Town Centre policy from the Calne Neighbourhood Plan. Some Steering group members did not concur with her opinion, feeling that having a similar worded policy as that of the Calne Neighbourhood Plan with regard to Town Centre could preclude the provision of more localised community shopping or larger out of town stores in the more rural areas of the Plan area. Other members expressed disappointment that having been developing policies for the Plan for the last two years that the Town Council were now looking to delay the progression of the Plan. It was queried whether the Town Council would be able to collate all the Town Centre regeneration information and associated evidence they wished to see in the Plan in time for the next Steering group meeting in March.

Resolved 1: The Town Council, in liaison with Lemon Gazelle, to bring forward wording on Town Centre Regeneration for the next Steering Group meeting. **2.** A small working group to meet on Wednesday 6th March to look more closely at the draft Plan document; John Glover, Tony Watts and Shirley McCarthy to be on the working party, supported by officers Teresa Strange and Lorraine McRandle.

- b) **Future Review of Plan (once adopted):** As per item 8d from the minutes of the Steering Group meeting held on 30th January, 2019, it had been agreed to include a policy and triggers for regular future monitoring and review of the Plan; this included an annual review or a review following a significant event, which would be decided by resolution of both councils. The MTC Clerk had produced a review policy based on wording from the Calne Neighbourhood Plan. It was felt that points 1 and 3 of this draft document were applicable to the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan and that in addition there should be a yearly review by

the Steering Group with each council sending their appointed representatives. **Resolved:** *Points 1 & 3 of the Review Policy provided by the MTC Clerk to be adopted with the inclusion of an annual review by the Steering Group, with each Council sending their existing or appointing new representatives.*

8. Correspondence:

- a) **Article in Melksham News Re: Environmental Issues/Clean Air and Town Centre Regeneration:** Correspondence in the letters page of the Melksham News requesting that the Neighbourhood Plan had policies to address air pollution, make the town pedestrianised and redevelop Avon Place shopping centre with compulsory purchase, create clean air traffic areas for young people and to plant more trees was noted. Mike Sankey felt that a letter of response should be sent to the resident addressing every point that was raised, and that a response should also be put in the Melksham News to explain the scope of the Plan, and its limitations, to other residents who may under the same misconception that it will be a document which can address every perceived problem in the Plan area. The MWPC Clerk advised that she had already responded to the resident explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan was, provided links to national guidelines and informed that the public would be able to have their say when it went out to Regulation 14 consultation. It was additionally noted that the SEA and HRA will assess any environmental impacts and issues as part of the regulatory process. **Resolved:** *The MWPC Clerk to draft a press release for the next edition of the Melksham News to be approved by the Working Group on 6th March.*
- b) **Member Correspondence Re: Protection of Trees:** Cllr. Watts had raised concerns over the removal of mature trees as part of approved planning permissions and wished to see the Neighbourhood Plan include a robust policy to protect trees. He read out some wording from the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Tree Policy, which he felt could be the basis of a policy for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Woodland Trust had also produced a good document with model local plan policies. **Resolved:** *A policy to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan with regard to tree protection and ensuring that appropriate and suitable trees are planted as part of any landscaping schemes.*
- c) **Renewable Energy:** Shirley McCarthy had provided information from the Wilts & Berks canal Trust with regard to their proposal for micro-hydro power scheme on the river Avon as part of the canal project. Lemon Gazelle had expressed concerns that the desire for a policy to cover renewable energy and a micro-hydro power scheme had not been driven by issues raised following public consultation, and therefore had not been put through the same rigorous independent process. Shirley had provided evidence from community engagement and consultations held by the Melksham Friendly Climate group and the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. She felt that this evidence was robust and that evidence for the Plan did not just have to come from the public consultations held for the Neighbourhood Plan. Further advice from Lemon Gazelle was that if the Steering Group felt strongly enough that a renewable energy policy should include also cover a micro-hydro power scheme that this could be tested at examination stage. **Resolved:** *The evidence provided by the Melksham Energy Group and the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust to be included as supporting documentation for a Renewable Policy in the Plan.*

MW

8. **Website Update:** It was noted that the films were complete and had been updated with any subtitle amendments. Officers from both councils just needed to review them following these updates before sending them on to Colin Harrison to upload onto the website. It was noted however, that the films would not go live until the Plan was going out to Regulation 14 public consultation.

9. **Next meeting date:**

The next meeting to be held on Wednesday 27th March, 2019 at 6.00pm at 1, Swift Way.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm

Signed:



Chairman of MNPSG

Date: 27/3/2019

