



Date: Wednesday 27 September 2023

Start: 6.30pm

Present:

Steering Group Members Present

Councillor David Pafford Chair (MWPC)
Councillor John Glover (MWPC)
Councillor Graham Ellis (MTC)
Councillor Pat Aves (MTC)
John Hamley (MTUG)
Shirley McCarthy (Environment)
Mark Blackham (Bowerhill Residents Action Group)
Chris Holden (Melksham Community Area Partnership)

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)

Task Group Members

Councillor Mark Harris, (MWPC)
Councillor Alan Baines, (MWPC)

Planning Consultants

Vaughan Thompson (Place Studio)
via Zoom

MTC Melksham Town Council
MWPC Melksham Without Parish Council
WC Wiltshire Council
MTUG Melksham Transport User Group

MINUTES

1. Welcome & Housekeeping

Councillor Pafford welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. To note apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Sankey who was attending a Western Area Planning Committee meeting.

3. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

5. To approve agenda item 7 to be held in closed session due to confidentiality (still draft plans/thoughts)

Resolved: For agenda item 7 to be held in closed session and for Councillors Baines and Harris as Members of the Housing Steering Group to remain for this part of the meeting.

6. a) To agree Minutes of Meeting held on 6 September

Resolved: To approve and for the Chair to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September.

b) To agree Confidential Notes to accompany Minutes of 6 September

Resolved: To approve the Confidential Notes to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan Committee meeting minutes held on 6 September and for the Chair to sign.

7. Site Allocations:

a) To receive feedback from Wiltshire Council on draft Local Plan allocation numbers for the Melksham NHP

THIS ITEM WAS HELD IN CLOSED SESSION.

Following the Steering Group querying the methodology used in the housing allocation in the Local Plan, a response had been received from Georgina Clampix-Dix, Head of Spatial Planning on how the neighbourhood planning housing requirement for Melksham and all market towns had been calculated.

It was felt the response from Wiltshire Council had still not clarified the methodology used clearly and therefore this, along with the housing number for Melksham and other matters could be queried via a response to the Local Plan consultation.

It was noted in the response from Georgina, reference was made to the Planning Inquiry taking place shortly regarding proposals for 210 homes and a 70-bed care home (PL/2022/08504) on Land South of Western Way and if allowed at appeal, would constitute a change in circumstances, which may reflect on what the Local Plan says the Neighbourhood Plan should set as a housing target for Melksham. Therefore, Vaughan suggested the housing figure could be reduced, if the Appeal was allowed.

Councillor Ellis sought clarification if the housing requirement was reduced if the Steering Group would have to allocate 200+ homes as stated in the Local Plan.

Vaughan explained the housing figure was a suggested figure, with no obligation to meet the figure precisely either above or below. Also, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) did not stop neighbourhood plans allocating more housing than the housing requirement.

Following discussion, it was felt the neighbourhood plan allocation had to continue as it was, even if the Appeal site was approved, as this was what the steering group had agreed.

The MWPC Clerk asked if the Steering Group wished to ask for clarity on the methodology used in the housing figure allocation as part of a response to the Local Plan, which both councils would be undertaking.

It was agreed the Steering Group were minded to pursue this with the support of both Councils, in their responses to the Local Plan in challenging the housing figure.

b) To approve Site Allocations policy wording

Cooper Tires Site

With regard to the Masterplan for the site, Vaughan explained discussion had taken place with Wiltshire Council's Regeneration and Economic Development Department with discussions ongoing with Cushman Wakefield, Cooper Tires agent. It was hoped a meeting could take place shortly with members of the Major Projects and Economic Regeneration Team at Wiltshire Council to talk about the process and methodology.

Resolved: To approve the site allocations policy wording for the Cooper Tires site.

Former Library Site

Vaughan explained the site allocation, which included the car park and former Chinese restaurant.

With regard to the car park and whether the existing car park is a valuable asset to the viability of the town centre, the MWPC Clerk had sought the evidence Wiltshire Council used in their car parking assessment, to arrive at their decision to promote the whole site for development, but was still awaiting the report. However, through further technical support, an assessment of all the publicly available car parks in the town centre, including the Library car park, was being undertaken, in order to assess its necessity and role in the car parking for the town centre. It was hoped this would be completed during the Regulation 14 consultation period and provide robust evidence to support the allocation of the car park as part of the site.

It was pointed out the car park was used by people dropping off and picking up children from The Manor Primary School and therefore as part of the

assessment, this needed to be borne in mind, as they would not necessarily purchase tickets and therefore provide evidence of the real use of the car park and whether the audit should be undertaken during these times to understand the real use of the car park.

The MWPC Clerk raised that at the presentation on Monday evening, that Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (in his role as Cabinet Member) explained that the housing on the former Library site would be run by Wiltshire Council and that conflicted with the current policy wording. It was agreed Place would revisit the wording to reflect 'Wiltshire Council or a registered social landlord' rather than just 'social landlord'.

Whitley site allocations

Vaughan explained the policies regarding the Whitley Farm and Middle Farm allocations in the plan.

Resolved: To approve the former Library Site, Whitley Farm and Middle Farm housing allocations in NHP#2.

c) To note Technical Support application made for Site Viability Assessments

The meeting noted an application had been made for a Locality Technical Support package for a viability assessment of the brownfield site allocations, with an interview held earlier in the day, with Locality, who were happy with the application, which had subsequently been sent off to Central Government for approval. This would be for the Cooper Tires, former library and Whitley Farm sites, with no requirement for the greenfield Middle Farm site.

8. Plan Drafting:

Resolved: To confirm the final draft version of the reviewed Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (NHP#2) now in place (subject to typesetting, accessibility, map updates).

9. Evidence documents:

a) To approve publication of final versions of evidence documents:

- i) AECOM's Site Assessment
- ii) AECOM's Town Centre Master Plan
- iii) AECOM's Design Guide

Resolved: To formally approve the above documents subject to any small factual corrections.

b) To note progress on AECOM's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Parish Clerk reported the SEA was currently being undertaken by AECOM and would look at the sites and brownfield first policy, as well as check all reasonable alternatives had been investigated and the sites chosen were the right ones.

c) To note progress on (HRA) Habitat Regulations Assessment scoping by Wiltshire Council

The Parish Clerk explained now the draft plan had been approved, Wiltshire Council would undertake the HRA.

d) To approve Consultation Statement for publication (pre Reg 14 version)

Resolved: To approve the Consultation Statement for publication.

e) To receive feedback from inception meeting with plan "Health Check" consultants and way forward with the Basic Conditions Statement (not required until Reg 16 – submission to Wiltshire Council)

The Parish Clerk explained that during the Regulation 14 consultation period, Intelligence Planning would be undertaking the health check of the plan, focusing on various aspects, such as site allocations, especially the Cooper Tires site and viability, it would also look at the Basic Conditions Statement with regard to conformity to the Core Strategy and Local Plan where necessary.

f) To receive feedback from inception meeting with plan "Car Park Audit/Review" consultants and seek volunteers to assist with audit (October)

The meeting was shown a scoping document regarding the car park audit/review, which AECOM would be undertaking, with volunteers sought to help undertake the audit.

It was suggested, the audit be undertaken at optimum times and to bear in mind, the car park was used by people at school drop off and pick up times, who did not necessarily buy a ticket.

10. Programme:

a) To note current progress against Programme and agree timescale for Regulation 14 consultation (pending authorisation of the draft plan by the Qualifying Bodies: Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council in October) and the finalisation of the SEA by AECOM

The Parish Clerk drew the meeting's attention to the level of work required in order to undertake the statutory Regulation 14 consultation and how the

responses to the consultation would be recorded and therefore had talked to other Neighbourhood Plan Steering Groups to understand how they had undertaken the work, which was extensive.

The Parish Clerk explained how responses would be recorded, such as the use of an online form, which would record the percentage of people responding to yes/no to each policy and therefore was useful in providing how many people either supported or did not support a particular policy.

Resolved: The following time frame was approved, which included a 7 week consultation period:

Monday 11 September	MWPC approved plan in principle
Monday 18 September	Briefing to MTC and MWPC councillors – no concerns raised that give rise to Qualifying Bodies not approving
Monday 25 September	MTC Full Council meeting – NHP on agenda, and aim is to get approval of plan in principle and that the Reg 14 consultation can be advertised before the QBs have approved
Weds 27 September	Steering Group approve
w/c 2 October	Produce promotional materials and send to Melksham News for art work
Monday 9 October	MWPC approve as Qualifying Body at Full Council
Tuesday 10 October	MTC approve as Qualifying Body at special Full Council meeting for that purpose
Tuesday 10 October	Melksham News is published online – with advert on Reg 14 consultation starting on 16 October and launch events listed
Thursday 12 October onwards	Melksham News delivered to homes in paper copies -with advert on Reg 14 consultation starting on 16 October and launch events listed
Monday 16 October	Start of Reg 14 consultation
Thursday 19 October to Friday 27 October	HALF TERM HOLIDAY
Tuesday 24 October	Melksham News published online – advertise launch events
Thursday 26 October during half term	Campus drop in event 4-7pm
Thursday 26 October onwards	Melksham News delivered to homes in paper copies – advertise launch events
Tuesday 7 November	Melksham News published online – reminder to respond to consultation

Thursday 9 November	Melksham News delivered to homes in paper copies – reminder to respond to consultation – too late to advertise events again
Saturday 11 November (am)	Campus drop in event 10am-2pm (designed to pick up passerbys if attending memorial at 11am for Remembrance)
Friday 10 November (pm)	Shaw & Whitley event 4pm – 7pm
Tuesday 21 November	Melksham News published online – last chance to respond to consultation
Thursday 23 November onwards	Melksham News delivered to homes in paper copies – last chance to respond to consultation
Saturday 2 December	Christmas Lights & Market – could have last push at this event
Sunday 3 December	End Date of consultation – 7 weeks

b) To receive feedback following internal briefing for Town, Parish & Wiltshire Councillors on 18 September

Feedback was received from Councillor Aves on the meeting, who felt it was very useful and had been well received by Members of the Town Council.

Thanks was passed on to Vaughan for an interesting presentation.

11. Promotion of Regulation 14 consultation:

a) To agree “message/principles” of new draft Plan for promotional materials

It was agreed the message was as follows:

- Brownfield sites first - a principle adopted by both councils, with the Steering Group working to achieve it and following feedback from the community during public consultation.
- To highlight the housing allocations in the plan, is to meet the requirement placed upon the Steering Group via Wiltshire Council's Local Plan.
- Responding to the housing need of the area, as highlighted in the very detailed Housing Needs Assessment.
- Protection of green spaces ie Local Green Spaces and Green Gaps.

The Parish Clerk explained the need to have evidence to support local green spaces and heritage assets and therefore during the consultation period could concentrate on this particular aspect, in order to get feedback/support from the community.

b) To agree how to promote consultation

i) Launch events in Melksham and Shaw/Whitley

It was agreed to have drop in events as follows:

Thursday, 26 October at the Campus, 4-7pm
Friday, 10 November at Shaw Village Hall, 4-7pm
Saturday, 11 November at Campus, 10am-2pm

ii) Melksham News adverts

Consultation adverts to go into the 12 October edition of Melksham News.

iii) Leaflet via Melksham News delivery mechanism (to update Mini Guide and reissue?)

It was agreed to undertake a leaflet drop via the Melksham News delivery mechanism at Referendum stage.

12. Finance

The Parish Clerk explained the invoice from Place included approximately 5 extra days work, such as reviewing of policies in relation to the Local Plan, which had not been included in the original quote provided in June.

Resolved: To approve the invoice from Place of £6,325.00 + VAT (£7,590.00). Invoice reference 6065.

**** Post Meeting Note, invoice number was incorrect, and should be 6072.****

13. To agree date and venue of Next Meeting of Steering Group

Members discussed the forthcoming workload and it was agreed that a report would be produced with the results of the Regulation 14 consultation towards the middle/end of December for members of the Steering Group to digest over the Christmas period. Work on the responses to any comments made would have to be done, with the steering group meeting again to review and agree any changes to the Plan as a result.

Next meeting to be held on Wednesday, 17 January at 6.30pm at Melksham Without Parish Council.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed.....
Chair, 17 January 2024