# Melksham Neighbourhood Plan
## Steering Group Meeting

### 1 Swift Way, Bowerhill, Melksham

Date: Wednesday, 25 September 2019
Start: 6pm

**Present**
**Steering Group Members**                                    **Officers**

Cllr. Tony Watts (MTC)                                        Teresa Strange (MWPC)
Cllr. Richard Wood (MWPC)                                     Lorraine McRandle (MTC)
Cllr. John Glover (MWPC)
Cllr Adrienne Westbrook (MTC)

ii. Community Representatives
Rolf Brindle (Transport)
Shirley McCarthy (Environment)
Colin Harrison (Chamber)
Mike Sankey (Community) *from 6.10pm*

1.     **Welcome & apologies:**
        Apologies had been received from Chris Holden, Wiltshire Cllr Phil Alford and Town Clerk Linda
        Roberts.

        Also in attendance were Kate Lea and Vaughan Thompson from Place Studio.

2.     **Declaration of Interests**
        There is a standing declaration of interest from Teresa Strange as a Trustee for Young
        Melksham.

3.     **Public Participation**
        One member of public was in attendance who did not wish to speak.

4.     **Minutes of the last meeting:**
        **a) Agree minutes of meeting held 4ᵗʰ September 2019:**
        *RESOLVED:* The minutes were formally approved and signed as an accurate record by the
        Chairman with the following amendment:
        Page 3 Min 6b amend from "original draft plan lacked **expression** of Melksham" to "original
        draft plan lacked **a real sense of the nature** of Melksham".

        AW clarified an issue that had arisen from the Minutes of the previous meeting (31ˢᵗ July) at
        a subsequent Town Council meeting; and confirmed that Melksham Town Council have
        Earmarked Reserves of £10,500 for the Neighbourhood Plan.

        *Mike Sankey joined the meeting at 6.10pm.*

**b) Matters Arising:**
TS reported that Officers were delegated the task of resolving the issues with the website (*Min 4b)* and MTC had purchased the ".org" address the following morning. CH was now waiting for a reply from *I Can* who ultimately were making a decision on whether the original website address domain could be returned which was the preferred option.

**5.     Finance Report**

**a)   Current Budget:**
Expenditure to date was £28,272.23 with £15,574.11 being the amount paid between the two councils and £12,698.12 from grant funding.

**b)    Invoice:** Place had not yet had time to produce the invoice as they had been doing a lot of work to get ready for tonight following Saturday's Evidence Gathering Workshop. A detailed invoice would be raised, and would be no more than £3,500.
*RESOLVED: The invoice to be paid on receipt, to a maximum value of £3,500.*

**6.      Place Studios (Katie Lea and Vaughan Thompson)**

**a)  Outputs from Evidence Gathering Workshop (Sat 21ˢᵗ September):** KL explained that Place had presented a rough first draft of a Timeline on Saturday, and this was now to go to David Way, the Wiltshire Council planning link officer for his input.    This had been produced to give the Steering Group a sense of when the Plan would be going out to consultation at Regulation 14 stage. This would be February, taking into account the evidence gathering work that is currently taking place and if any scoping for SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) was required for example.    It covers the outline of work still required to be done, many of the tasks were happening concurrently such as the drafting of the Plan. The Timeline was a working document that would be shared, but needs input from David Way on timings for the tasks to be undertaken by Wiltshire Council. An SEA, if required, will be consulted on at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan.

It was felt that Saturday's workshop was an enjoyable and productive day.    The groups looked at facilities, landscapes and views, green infrastructure and all the aspects that covered such as green spaces, rivers, public rights of way, cycle routes; and character and design.
The groups recorded the assets, positive issues, trends and challenges coming forward and goals; all in a mapped form.

**FACILITIES:**
The first stage is for the maps to be checked for accuracy and omissions; to fill in any gaps and to provide more details where there are queries raised. There is a briefing note for this section, which sets out the specific tasks needed and the deadline for the work to be completed is the end of October.

The originals from the workshop will be left with the officers, and a shared online file set up for the sharing of information between all moving forward.

**LANDSCAPE & CHARACTER ASSESSMENT:**
There were two maps provided this evening; one of landscapes and views and a landscape character map from the existing evidence that Wiltshire Council hold; this had been updated at the weekend at a local level, particularly with rural routeways.

KL explained that David Way had been very helpful in the run up to the Workshop in terms of detailing the evidence that Wiltshire Council are currently gathering for their own Strategic work and also in terms of providing mapping as other sources were proving to be an expensive option.

The landscape group identified where views were to and from, and now needed checking and photos taken to build the evidence. This is all set out in the briefing note, which requires a bit more technical evidence for the views; not overly complex but some guidelines to be followed to ensure consistency.

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:**
This group looked at public Rights of Way and TS had sent information subsequently such as key routes that they have already started mapping from the written form. This section also includes flooding areas, ancient woodland, tree planting strategies and a new map that starts to inform green infrastructure policy and the wider development strategy for the area. You can begin to start to see the early forms of the development plan.

**CHARACTER & DESIGN:**
The Melksham Town map has been done, but the work done in the wider Without area at the weekend is still to be captured on the map.    This shows pre-war, 20th century and 21st century housing; and then what/how people identify with their neighbourhood rather than its age or history. These maps need checking and Place are working on a brief to draw out the key features to influence future residential developments.

To sum up, for each of the 4 areas there will be a series of maps, and a brief with it with written task work or mapping requirements. These exercises to check and fill in gaps are the ideal opportunity to sit and review informally with other groups, such as ramblers and share the work being done.

There are some nice heritage assets in the town by the river for example, and this would be good to map and involve a historical group for example.    There was also a discussion on Saturday about The Spa and an aspiration to have it classed as a conservation area, and there may be a way to do it by mapping it as a group of historical assets. Place will provide a toolkit for mapping locally valued heritage toolkits.

Place to discuss with officers and agree the best way for storing and distributing the briefs, information and plans, probably best by access to a shared drive with emailed links

TS explained that following the session on Saturday additional evidence had been sent to Place which included; review of polling stations (as important community venues), walking maps, public rights of ways priority routes, historic village green applications. TS shared the "grass cutting" mapping document.    LMcR and TS had undertaken a wide community engagement exercise following advertising in the local paper and on social media and then met with all sorts of contacts such as a local vicar, community groups, representative from

the nature reserve etc, and had undertaken a similar mapping exercise but with some really detailed local knowledge such as where the WI planted trees historically, where bats roost; where there are Christmas tree events and children's informal routes to school etc. Place had photos of this mapping document, but the main hard copy to remain with the members at present for consulting. As the original use of this mapping document was to show Wiltshire Council's grasscutting contract it already contained pretty much all the amenity space in the Plan area.

**Task Groups:**
The following task group leads were reconfirmed, following the work undertaken at the weekend.

**FACILITIES:** Adrienne Westbrook & John Glover

**LANDSCAPE & CHARACTER ASSESSMENT:** Richard Wood & Phil Alford

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:** Richard Wood & Adriene Westbrook

**CHARACTER & DESIGN:** Tony Watts & Shirley McCarthy, with the possibility of asking MWPC Councillor Alan Baines to join this group

**STRATEGIC:** Tony Watts & John Glover

TS reported that Broughton Gifford & Holt Explorers (about 15 young people aged 14-18 years) had contacted Wiltshire Council and had been filtered through to the parish and town council to see if there was any community work that they could do in the Melksham area. The Explorers were also from the Melksham area and had map reading skills etc and could be a good fit for the Landscape & Views work for example.

AW reminded members that there was a great community volunteer photographer, Linda De Santiz, whose photos were of professional quality and TS explained that another local photographer had also agreed for his photos posted on historic Melksham social media to be used for the Plan.

b) **Community Engagement:**
Vaughan Thompson explained that he has been progressing the evolution of the Plan whilst Katie and Georgina have been working on the evidence gathering tasks. VT had brought along to the last meeting an outline of draft content and structure for the Plan and is now working on importing the work already done to crystallise the priority policies already agreed. This will be brought to the next Steering Group meeting.

VT had also been putting some thought into the process relating to communications and engagement as the Plan moves towards its Regulation 14 consultation; to raise awareness of the importance and relevance of the Plan for the future of the Melksham area.    This would be informally with key contacts within the community, and stakeholders. There is no time for a full consultation before going to Reg 14, but there is the opportunity to conduct some informal engagement with key people and organisations and for them to have an input. This is to ensure that the Plan is moving forward in the most robust and sound condition in terms of quality of information and policy direction at Reg 14 stage.

VT referred to the Timeline and went on to explain that now and during October the team and Steering Group are working on gathering the best evidence base, and Place will concurrently be working on the Draft Plan, which will be a working document headed for November. He suggests that November would be a good time to do some communication/PR/publication about the Plan, to "reboot" it. The opportunity to explain why the Plan is being done, and how it fits in with the Local Plan, to explain the two staged process of a Plan to 2026 and then to 2036. Importantly, it's the chance to set out what this Plan, at this stage, is covering and share the mapping/evidence base as working documents and how people can have an input at this stage. The aim is to get local people as informed as possible in November. This was envisaged to use the vehicles/routes used in the past; the local press, social media, events in venues and most importantly the website.   The Steering Group had talked in the past about the need to keep local stakeholders and politicians involved, and November would be a good time to do this, perhaps with presentations to the town and parish councils; this could tie in with the evidence gathering work with specialist interest community groups which might be better by email communication as more content specific.   So, for a 4-week period in November some feedback may be received in addition to the consultations undertaken before.   The Steering Group may receive some rumblings of objections too, and these are better to be aired now and responses can be made.

December is the time to take the extra feedback and refine the Plan, and in terms of content is ready to go to Regulation 14.   After Christmas is getting ready for the Regulation 14 process.   KL explained that it was a formal process with lots of steps, and the parish and town councils will have to have a thought to their meeting cycles to ensure Plan approval before going out to the formal Reg 14. consultation.   VT explained that he felt that the programme he had outlined gave a proportionate and appropriate amount of publicity and opportunity for informal input into the Plan.

It was clarified that the Steering Group weren't seeking new views or topics, but seeking views on the topics and draft policies already in place – due to the timescales in place and to avoid consultation fatigue.   Lots of consultation has been done over the last few years, and this is much more about engaging and informing of what the Plan is looking like and receiving comments on that content; looking for corrections and major omission and not new content topics.

*RESOLVED: 1. The Steering Group to book a 2-page spread in the Melksham News for the 20th November issue, at an approx. cost of £450 2. The Steering Group to request to make a presentation at the next Area Board meeting to be held on 13th November.*
*3. Place to provide the content for the paper and presentation, with the next Steering Group meeting giving final draft approval. 4. Place Consultants to review the "Talking Heads" videos already prepared to promote the Plan and the Regulation 14 consultation.*

VT did have a concern on meeting those timescales, and would discuss with his colleagues on his return to the office and review, but the officers to book the space and Area Board meeting in the meantime.

c) **Town Centre Strategy:** KL reported that members of Place had met with consultants Townswork who were working on the Town Centre regeneration work for the Town Council. They felt that there were some areas of overlap, and Townswork had shared their

contents page etc with Place, and they wished to do the same with the Neighbourhood Plan contents page etc with the blessing of the Steering Group. ***RESOLVED:*** *The Steering Group are happy for the Contents report that the last Steering Group meeting reviewed, to be shared with Townswork.*

VT felt that within the Neighbourhood Plan (2026) there was the opportunity to use some of the Town Centre high level objectives in the development strategy, which was crystallising before Christmas. It may also allow the Plan to develop a project for a Town Centre master plan or strategy, and gives the opportunity for some good, bespoke evidence for the Review Plan (2036) for economic development.

d) **Local Plan Review:** There is a planned Local Plan Review meeting on 1st October at Calne Library that representatives are attending, and this will have a rural housing focus (in a similar vein to the meeting held in the Town Hall in June which had a Melksham town focus). The agenda had been circulated which asks if attendees are happy with their plans for rural housing, but they will not reveal what that is until the actual session so it is hard to form a collective view beforehand; there would also be potential housing numbers revealed for villages. TS pointed out a Timeline in Wiltshire Council meeting packs from March and April which ran the Local Plan and Wiltshire Housing Site Allocation Plan alongside and which demonstrated that the Local Plan Review had already done their site allocation work during Q1 and Q2. Place Consultants had been asked for their steer to the reps attending the meeting on 1st October and their response was that the reps particularly asked about their process, programme and progress of the Local Plan review. To gain clarity of what they are doing and when; and when they will be releasing information that is relevant to Melksham in terms of evidence. It may be an opportunity for the reps to outline what the Steering Group are doing in terms of the Plan and be open and collaborative about gathering evidence, the topic headings etc. The aim to be an exchange of information. It was also noted that this session was not area specific, there were 3 sessions being held across Wiltshire and there would be a lot of parishes and towns represented. It may be useful to take the document from the "health check workshop" that outlined the topics that were in the Plan to 2026, in the Plan to 2036 and in the Local Plan. Town Councillors expressed the view that they did not see the point of them attending as the meeting had a rural focus and was not relevant to the town; their rural focus was Melksham Without. SMc commented that there would be more opportunity to discuss zero carbon options as the rural areas have a lack of mains gas and drainage. It was felt that the rural issues were important, but vastly different from the town issues. TW would prefer a much more targeted approach to Wiltshire Council about a specific meeting, and be more assertive in that request. VT felt that there was no problem with Wiltshire Council's current level of engagement for the Neighbourhood Plan, and doesn't see any harm in pressing them on their programme at the Local Plan Review meeting and if given the opportunity outlining what the Steering Group topics were for the 3 stages of the Plan (to 2026, to 2036, Local Plan). But did agree that it seemed silly that there was not more engagement with the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan that is emerging in the light of sizeable housing numbers in the Local Plan, and is treated in the same way as a small village.

7. **Policy Requests:** The Town Council requested that with the growing interest in tackling a Climate Emergency and the Government insulation standards lagging well behind what people want, that the Plan should push for a carbon zero standard in new housing. There were 3 to 4 comments in the evidence base about increased insulation standards and renewable energy. VT responded that

one of the topic headings for the Plan would be "Responding to Climate Change: Tackling Climate Emergency" and that there was already existing policy content written on Renewable Energy and Sustainable Construction; a lot of narrative and evidence (nationally and internationally).   It was acknowledged that the current Planning legislature was weak in these areas at present, but VT could see no reason why these policies could not be put into the Plan at this stage, that are "encouraging" – what you want to happen and why. It could be included in the Vision or the Headline Topic with encouraging/persuasive policies to back it up. KL added that it will also run through other topics as a theme, so in Green Infrastructure, and how people travel about in more sustainable modes of transport. It was discussed that this had been removed before, but it was felt that the policy may have included wording such as "must" and "insist" whereas these policies will encourage and persuade.   ***RESOLVED:***   *The Steering Group include encouraging policies on sustainable construction and renewable energy, to be as strongly worded as permitted.*

8. **Potential Melksham Bypass:**   Arising from Min. 6a from the last Steering Group meeting was a new agenda item to discuss the merits of the Routes A & C of the proposed Melksham Bypass.

 RW gave the view of Melksham Without Parish Council. "*Melksham Without Parish Council support an eastern bypass and of the two proposals currently on the table prefer Option C proving that sufficient mitigation is provided to the communities that will be in/close to its path.*"

  The Town Council representatives said that the Town Council also preferred Option C.

  Both JG and RB suggested alternative routes at the Bowerhill/Seend end.
  ***RESOLVED:***   *The Steering Group prefer Option C of the two routes proposed for the Melksham Eastern Bypass.*

  TW asked that the Steering Group write to Wiltshire Council and state that they prefer Route C and object to A and that the parish and town council do the same thing.   ***RESOLVED: 1.*** *The Steering Group write to Wiltshire Council and the Western Gateway and state that they prefer Option C and object to Option A.* ***2.*** *Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council be asked if they will do likewise.*

7.       **Date of Next Meeting:**   Wednesday, 30 October at 1 Swift Way.