



# Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

## Steering Group Meeting

1 Swift Way, Bowerhill, Melksham

Date: Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019

Start: 6pm

### Present

#### Steering Group Members

Cllr. Adrienne Westbook (MTC)  
Cllr. Tony Watts (MTC) – Vice Chairman  
Cllr. Pat Aves (WC)  
Cllr. Richard Wood (MWPC) - Chairman  
Cllr. Paul Carter (MWPC)

#### Officers

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

### Community Representatives

Rolf Brindle (Transport)  
Shirley McCarthy (Environment)  
Colin Harrison (Chamber)

### Invited Guests

Vaughan Thompson (Place Consultants)

#### 1. Welcome & apologies:

Apologies had been received from Cllr John Glover with Cllr Paul Carter substituting, and from Cllr Phil Alford with Cllr Pat Aves substituting. Mike Sankey was not present.

#### 2. Declaration of Interests

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

#### 3. Public Participation (1 member of public present)

The member of public did not wish to speak.

#### 4. Steering Group membership

The members noted the resignation of Colin Goodhind, the Chair of Melksham Community Area Partnership (MCAP) from the Steering Group due to the pressure on time commitments and wished to formally thank him for his contribution to the Plan to date. Colin had spoken to the former Chair of MCAP, Chris Holden, who was interested in taking Colin's place on the Steering Group.

**RESOLVED:** Chris Holden to be invited to join the Steering Group as a community representative.

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

a) Agree minutes of meeting held 15 May 2019:

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2019 were formally approved and signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

**b) Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising, not already covered by agenda items.

**6. To note delegated decisions and actions taken since the last meeting:**

**a) Appointment of Consultants:** It was noted that Place Consultants had been appointed as consultants under delegated powers on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019. Their initial quotation was noted, with a Day Rate of £500 and work undertaken by the lead consultant at £55 per hour and consultant at £45 per hour and an outline of requirements, fees and timeframes but all before a Health Check and Review of the current Plan had been undertaken, and therefore this may change.

**b) Neighbourhood Plan Workshop 1 (Weds 26<sup>th</sup> June):** The resulting report was noted.

**c) Neighbourhood Plan Workshop 2 (Weds 10<sup>th</sup> July):** The resulting report was noted.

**d) Health Check & Review document:** The resulting report was noted.

**6. Finance Report**

**a) Invoices for approval:** The following invoices were formally approved for payment:

**i) Place Consultants Inv 5800** for Neighbourhood Planning Support for 3 of the 4 quoted days of Stage 1 support at £1,500 plus travel expenses £34.20 totalling £1,534.20 + VAT (£1,841.04) *Already paid as approved at Workshop 2 by members of the Steering Group*

**ii) Place Consultants Inv 5801** for Neighbourhood Planning Support for remaining day of Stage 1 (£500) and second Workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> July (£125) plus travel expenses £68.40 totalling £693.40 + VAT (£832.08)

**iii) Wix invoice for hosting [www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org):** The annual fee for the website hosting from 3/7/19 to 3/7/20 had been paid online by MWPC at £61.88 + VAT (£74.25).

**RESOLVED:** The 2 invoices to Place Consultants for £1,841.04 & £832.08 and the invoice to Wix for £74.25 be formally approved for payment.

**b) Current Budget:** The spend to date, including the two Place invoices was £28,087.98.

**c) Grant Funding Update & new Quotation from Place Consultants:** The members noted that of the first Locality grant £6,125 was spent, and the remainder had to be returned at end of March 2018. The second Locality grant was for £8,425 of which £5,525 has been spent giving £2,900 remaining which in this round of funding does not have to be returned but a change of use application will need to be done to set against the first two invoices from Place (totalling £2,227.60 excluding VAT) as the second grant was for consultants' work up to and beyond Regulation 14, leaving £672.40 of the second grant left to set against future Place consultants work and the outstanding £400 to add the community videos onto the website.

Further grant funding is available, but standard funding is £8k with £9k available for a variety of criteria, this had been checked with Locality and additional funding had been awarded on the criteria of allocating housing sites. There was the opportunity to apply for more funding (if housing sites were allocated) from Locality but only from the total pot of £17k (£8k + £9k), and so as the first two grants had totalled £12,575 the Steering Group

could only apply for a maximum of £4,425 at this stage; this had been checked and confirmed with Locality. For the “Review Plan” to 2036, a fresh round of funding could be applied for, again on the same basis of standard £8k plus additional £9k for meeting a set criteria. If affordable housing was being considered in Plans then it unlocked further funding pots too. The “Technical Support” from Locality came from a similar application process and it was very likely that a SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) would be required for the Plan if a housing site was allocated (the draft Plan will need to be sent to David Way at Wiltshire Council for screening); and Locality were awaiting a ‘phone call in the morning pending decisions made at the meeting tonight to set the SEA in place with AECOM. It was noted that AECOM had already done some of the SEA work when they visited the sites and assessed them.

Place Consultants had now reviewed and resubmitted their quotation, following the Health Check & Review and workshops held, now they were in a clearer position to ascertain the work outstanding, whilst in agreement with the Steering Group as to what aspects were to be included in the Original Plan to 2026, Review Plan to 2036 and what should be collaboratively worked on with Wiltshire Council at a strategic level and so therefore sat in the emerging Local Plan instead. This quotation came to £16,500 which was more than the grant funding available, and more than the amount previously pledged by the two councils to get to Regulation 14.

The Chair invited Vaughan Thompson from Place Consultants to run through the quotation and the members reviewed his comments about what had to be done for the 2026 Plan and what could be left for the Review Plan at a later date. There was some discussion as to whether funding was provided by Locality for the process of looking at allocating sites, which could lead to no sites being allocated; or whether a site had to be allocated, this was a question for Locality but had not come up in discussion with the Locality personnel to date; despite them being aware that the Melksham area had already exceeded the housing numbers required to 2026.

It was also noted that Jeff from Place had previously raised a concern that Locality may not feel that funding the work of the consultants in supporting the collaborative work with Wiltshire Council for strategic input on the Local Plan was eligible for their funding, but this had been raised with Locality and they were not concerned by this.

Vaughan stressed that Place were interested in making the very best use of the funds available, and so would assist with toolkits to maximise the information already available in the community and maximise the information that Wiltshire Council may already hold and could share, so that the best use of the consultants’ time was utilised.

The scope of the quotation was discussed in detail and it was unanimously agreed that the all of the work outlined in the quotation was valued to be included in the first Plan; including allocating rural housing sites. It was noted that the outstanding amount to fund by both councils was £12,075 and the Town Council had previously pledged up to £5k and the Parish Council up to £7.5k. Members of Melksham Town Council were clear that the additional funding would be available to make up any shortfall.

**RESOLVED:**

1. The Steering Group to apply to Locality for the outstanding £2,900 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grant for a change of use to be set against Stage 1 of the initial Place quote.
2. The Steering Group approve the quotation from Place Consultants for £16,500 excluding VAT and travel expenses.
3. The Steering Group to apply to Locality for the maximum amount of funding available at £4,425.
4. The cost of the quotation of £16,500 less the funding available £4,425 = £12,075 will be funded by the town and parish council at the agreed split; as well as the previously agreed £400 to fund the additional website work.

- 7. Wiltshire Council's Local Plan Review (12<sup>th</sup> June):** The members received feedback from the recent Local Plan Review meeting that was held for the "Melksham Town" area, which included invited representatives from Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without, Broughton Gifford and Seend parish councils. The members noted the Minutes of the meeting produced by Wiltshire Council and the robust email from MWPC following the meeting which outlined concerns about the lack of detail and emphasis from the meeting, as well as omissions. In addition, the background documentation had been amended but MWPC still did not feel that the numbers were correct, and were yet to receive a response from Wiltshire Council's Spatial Planning team. Members of MTC shared the concerns raised by MWPC about the Minutes and errors on the original documentation and expressed their thanks to the parish council for their speedy response.

Earlier in the day, an invitation had been received by the Town and Parish council to a further consultation event, to build on the workshop events that had taken place in October and November 2018 and would have a rural focus. Three separate events were being held across Wiltshire, and the members of the steering group agreed that the following representatives would attend the event on **Tues 1<sup>st</sup> October 6-8pm at Calne Library:**

- Adrienne Westbrook, MTC
- Tony Watts, MTC and Vice Chair of Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- Lorraine McRandle, Acting Deputy Town Clerk, MTC
- Richard Wood, Chair of MWPC and Chair of Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- John Glover, Vice Chair of MWPC
- Teresa Strange, Clerk, MWPC
- Jo Eccleston, Parish Officer, MWPC

It was noted that the Town Clerk was unable to attend this session due to a prior commitment.

- 8. Wiltshire Council's Neighbourhood Plan Surgery (16<sup>th</sup> July) and future actions:** Members of the Steering Group attended a Surgery session at Wiltshire Council which included a 1:1 session with David Way (Link Officer) and a member of the Planning Team. Several questions had been raised before the session, as requested, which Place Consultants had assisted with and the members noted the positive responses regarding collaborative working for the Local Plan Review and approach to site selection for housing and town centre sites.

There were still concerns however that Wiltshire Council's response was "one size fits all" and that they had responded to say that they were working collaboratively with all Neighbourhood Plan teams and parish and town councils and that in the Melksham area a special input was required due to the amount of housing being considered in the future, and the strategic aspects regarding community facilities such as schools and the potential Bypass. There was an opportunity for a more collaborative approach, with the Local Plan and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan having a complimentary set of policies and that it was the responsibility of Wiltshire Council, under the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) to reach out. There was a desire for Wiltshire Council to be transparent and open with their background information and share any research they have already undertaken so that the Neighbourhood Plan does not duplicate this, but can plug any gaps with local knowledge.

Some discussion was held on the best way forward to achieve a more collaborative and open relationship with Wiltshire Council, and it was agreed that Place Consultants would discuss and come back to the Steering Group. Place were happy to attend future meetings with Wiltshire Council as Planning professionals, and it was agreed that this was a good way forward. In addition, "Strategic Liaison" was one of the topic groups that was being taken forward by the Steering Group, and the representatives would be fully briefed by Place as part of that process.

With regards to any Town Centre sites, LR explained that she had laid down a marker regarding future discussions between Wiltshire Council and large employers/site owners in the town and would be involved at any future discussions/meetings. The Town Council had employed consultants to look at the Town Centre and plans were currently being developed for the future Vision.

#### **Housing Site Allocation:**

The quotation previously agreed for Place Consultants (Min. 6c (2)) included for work on Site Allocation but this was formally resolved.

**RESOLVED:** The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan to 2026 will include housing site allocation.

9. **Next steps:** Place would be providing toolkits to help the working groups and members of the community to build on the work already done and evidence already collected, to deliver robust policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. There was no criticism of the policy wording or policy intent of the Plan to date, work was just needed to benchmark the evidence.

Jeff and Katie from Place will hold briefing sessions for the volunteers and bring the toolkits to those sessions. The following representatives will be managing the process and it was emphasised that they would not be expected to do all the work, but that by careful harnessing of community volunteer groups and research already in the community that this could lead to the cost of the work being undertaken by Place being reduced and therefore stretch further.

- **Landscape** *Richard Wood, Phil Alford*
- **Green Infrastructure** *Richard Wood, Adrienne Westbrook*
- **Character & Design** *Tony Watts, Shirley McCarthy*
- **Facilities** *Adrienne Westbrook, John Glover*
- **Strategic (Liaison with Wiltshire Council)** *Tony Watts, John Glover*

It was agreed that Mike Sankey who had been unable to attend the workshops and Chris Holden who was joining the Steering Group be asked if they wished to join one of the topic groups, in addition the member of public in attendance was asked if they wanted to participate and they wished to be involved with green spaces. Paul Carter offered to get involved with the Strategic work, as substitute for John Glover if the need arose. When it was discussed at the workshops it was suggested that volunteer Brian Flynn who regularly walks all the Rights of Way locally would be a good person to invite for Green Infrastructure and MWPC Cllr Alan Baines for Character & Design as a member of the original Housing Task Group.

10. **Next Meeting:** Due to several apologies tendered for the last Wednesday of August, the next Steering Group meeting will be held on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 6pm at the MWPC meeting venue at 1 Swift Way.**

*The meeting closed at 7.44pm.*

**9. Next meeting date:**

Wednesday, 29 May 2019 at 1 Swift Way, Bowerhill.

Signed:

Chairman of MNPSG

Date: