



Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Meeting

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

Date: Wednesday 27th March 2019

Start: 6pm

Present

Steering Group Members

i. Councillors

Cllr. Richard Wood (MWPC)
Cllr. John Glover (MWPC)
Cllr. Tony Watts (MTC)
Cllr Adrienne Westbrook (MTC)
Cllr. Phil Alford (WC)

Cllr. Pat Aves was in attendance but as the Town Council already had 2 reps in attendance, and Wiltshire Council had their nominated rep in attendance, Cllr Pat Aves took no part in voting.

ii. Community Representatives

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

Officers

Teresa Strange (MWPC)
Jo Eccleston (MWPC)
Jeff Mills (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.

Cllr. Adrienne Westbrook represented the Town Council in the absence of Cllr. Richard Wiltshire. Jeff Mills represented the Town Clerk in the absence of Linda Roberts and Lorraine McRandle. Colin Goodhind (MCAP) have given his apologies due to work commitments.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

None.

3. **Public Participation:**

There was one member of the public present, but they wanted to observe and made no

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comment.

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

a) Agree minutes of meeting held 27th February 2019: Resolved: *The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2019 were formally approved and signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.*

b) Matters Arising: From 8a – Article in Melksham News Re: Environmental Issues/Clean Air and Town Centre: A member queried if a press release had gone into the Melksham News. The MWPC Clerk replied that the paper was full to capacity and would not accept any new articles, and so a section on the Neighbourhood Plan was included in the parish council's ½ page quarterly newsletter instead. Cllr Westbrook reported that the Town Council were likely to do a similar thing when their quarterly newsletter was published and include an update on the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. **Finance Report:**

a) Invoices for Payment: It was noted that there were no invoices for approval as Lemon Gazelle had not undertaken any consultancy work since the last meeting.

b) Current Budget: The current expenditure to date was therefore the same as reported at the last meeting under Min 6b.

c) Locality End of Year Report: The MWPC Clerk reported that a "year-end" report was due to Locality on the spend against the grant funding awarded for 2018/19. As this was a factual report against actual spend, the Officers would prepare and submit. Locality had informally notified that more funding would be available for 2019/20 and officers would begin to start the application process when available.

6. **Draft Policy Document:**

The MWPC Clerk explained that there were several versions of the draft policy document to review. There was the original draft with "tracked changes" showing all the additional information, deletions and amendments following the two working parties held on 6th & 19th March. There were also two documents produced by Cllr Tony Watts which had the first 10 pages in a different layout and style as an example, but the wording in the introduction and those 10 pages had used new text and some of the original text and not the amended "tracked changed" text; likewise there was a separate document for the Environment section which had been completely rewritten by Cllr Tony Watts, and again, this was not "tracked changed" either but rewritten so it was difficult to see what had previously been agreed. The MWPC Clerk had sent this to Lemon Gazelle to gain their feedback for tonight's meeting however, they had felt unable to do so as there were three versions of the draft plan provided and they did not feel that they were in a position to know which version of the text the Steering Group had agreed and requested one amalgamated version. The MWPC Clerk reported that she did not feel it was worth her producing that one document for tonight as she did not know which text would be approved and that she felt that using "tracked changes" was the best way for everyone to see what had been amended, added and deleted. The Town Council had also produced a "work in progress" holding document for the Town Centre section, which would be looked at separately tonight.

From the working parties, the Clerk felt that the main change related to the Brownfield policies and that these had been removed from different sections relating to the town centre or employment and were to be put in one section together (suggested by Cllr Watts to be in the Environment section), with a different policy based on where the site was, with three

areas/zones 1. Town Centre 2. Wider employment areas/industrial estates and 3. Residential areas. The Town Council had provided a map showing what they defined as the "town centre" in their draft Town Centre policy, which had been circulated to members when received this afternoon. The Clerk advised that she did not feel that the working parties had made any major changes, they had met to flesh out the policies with a "local flavour"; as requested by Lemon Gazelle. Members had received these documents a week ago, and so hopefully had had chance to read through before the meeting.

Concerns were raised by some members that the Plan was written in "planning speak" and that it would be boring and perhaps inaccessible for some members of the public. Other members felt that it was a legal, planning document and therefore had to be written in that style but that did not stop some public meetings being held to explain the document and its value and importance to residents, but realistically it was a document that primarily would be read by "planners" as it was a legal document to be referenced against future planning applications. It was felt that all the members agreed on the content of the "tracked changed" draft plan policy document, and that the layout and style of the information presented could be discussed next.

Cllr Adrienne Westbrook explained that the Town Council had met to discuss how they could move forward with providing information on a Town Centre policy for the Plan, without delaying the Neighbourhood Plan for a significant period of time. They therefore had produced a "holding statement" which defined the Town Centre and were likely to commission a Town Centre Plan next year, similar to the one that was produced in 2005. The definition of the "town centre" area was important as it related to desires for brownfield sites within the town centre. The holding statement would be in place until further work was done in this area, and that could then be incorporated into a future revision of the Plan or the new one for 2026+. The representatives of the Town Council were keen to advise that this was not a finished policy for the Town Centre, and apologised that it was only in draft format at this stage but they were keen to get something to the Steering Group tonight so as not to delay the Plan in any way. It was generally agreed that the definition of the "town area" was important to be included in the Plan at this stage, due to its relation to brownfield sites, but that other Town Centre policies could be included at a later revision of the Plan, rather than hold the whole Plan up now at this late stage.

Members discussed the map area defining the "Town Centre" and it was noted that the colour shading was not relevant on the map shown and that at present that line was just indicative and not the final defined line but it included the railway station, Avonside Enterprise Park and the Cooper Tires site to the north, (*the old "City" area*) and part of Spa Road to the south east, Lowbourn to the north east and the A350 to the west. A final definitive map would be provided by the Town Council, rather than the block plan in this draft version.

A timescale on the Town Centre policy was requested, and the Town Clerk's PA advised that the Town Council were arranging to meet with Lemon Gazelle to progress this further. The MWPC Clerk expressed concerns that for the duration of this process all meetings with the consultants had been with officers and representatives of both councils and other members of the steering group, and that perhaps a discussion offline was required in general about the shared administration of the Plan work. Whilst it was acknowledged at the previous meeting that the Town Council would liaise and seek advice from Lemon Gazelle it was always presumed that this exercise would have taken part as a working party with a makeup of different members of the steering group. The grant funding provided by Locality for the consultants was very clearly

prescribed line by line against an approved quotation, and as noted earlier the grant funding had to be used by 31st March 2019; therefore, the MWPC Clerk had questioned who was paying for separate meetings between the Town Council and Lemon Gazelle which was outside the scope of the funding. It was agreed that the town centre policy (not the major Town Centre Plan being commissioned later in the year) was an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Chair confirmed that the process had always been that draft text for a subject had been put to the Steering Group for approval in principle first and then sent to the consultants to put into planning policy terminology to ensure robust enough to stand up to external scrutiny. Cllr Westbrook acknowledged that the town centre element of the Plan should have been looked at more closely by the Town Council two years ago, and apologised for the delay at this late stage.

The Steering Group agreed that they had accepted the amendments, additions and deletions on the "tracked changed" document following the two working parties, and that there was a plan moving forward for the Town Centre section of the Plan with the Town Council providing a draft policy and defined town centre definitive line for the next Steering Group meeting.

Resolved: *The Steering Group accept the "tracked changes" on the draft Plan document provided to the meeting with the agenda papers (further to the working parties on 6th & 19th March) are accepted and sent to Lemon Gazelle for incorporating into the draft Plan.*

The Group then looked at the documents produced by Cllr Tony Watts.

Cllr Tony Watts ran through the document he had produced with a changed layout which he felt would work much better than the current version provided by Lemon Gazelle. He suggested that each section starts with a small vision statement and then the objectives are short and snappy, with the policies following with the same numbering and link the policies and objectives together. He felt that the new layout style produced by Lemon Gazelle made that element of the Plan worse.

He had kept most of the content as before, but included a vision statement, introduction, some change to content and some additional wording and had re-worded the objectives in a more succinct way. To date, he had just worked through the first 10 or so pages rather than the whole document.

He had written a new policy EP1 on Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy and changed the Brownfield policies (now numbered EP2 on the version provided by Cllr Watts) so that these were now arranged against a spatial arrangement (Business Parks, Town Centre, Other Locations) and EP3 Landscape and Biodiversity had been written with some new tree policies. Shirley McCarthy added that at the working party a clause had been added about ancient trees but this had not been picked up in this new version. It had been agreed at the previous meeting that tree policies would be included, and then the group had looked at advice on Neighbourhood Plan policies from the Woodland Trust, but this text included new tree policies written by Cllr Watts. The Green Spaces section had also been rewritten and comparison of the two documents also showed some additional statements had been written regarding the Wilts & Berks canal restoration. The MWPC Clerk briefly ran through which policies were new text and policies, so members were aware of what had been added; for example, business use classes had been added to the Brownfield policies. Members raised whether the new text was evidenced based, and Cllr Watts confirmed that he had picked up comments on Low Carbon Energy from residents on the "Issues report", although not a high number. It was acknowledged that the evidence from all the public consultations had been gathered into an "Issues"

document, and then from there into an "Issues to Options" document, and then the policies were formed from those agreed "Options". Cllr Watts informed that everything that had been written had been evidenced; and it was acknowledged that he had spent a lot of time and effort providing the new text and layout.

Concerns were raised about the new wording for the canal section, that the Plan supported the line of the canal but it was felt but this new wording was now more open ended and opened up the area for more potential housing, regardless of the canal, and a policy that stated it was happy for housing to enable the canal, could open the doors to inappropriate, unwanted housing development; as previously advised by the Spatial Planning Officer from Wiltshire Council. As an example, there was a current planning application, in its third iteration, for housing in this area that did not contribute to the canal. The MWPC Parish Officer also pointed out that the photograph showed properties with river frontage, and this is something that the steering group had previously stated that they did not want to see; that they did not want to see a lot of exclusive river fronted properties at the exclusion of public access for all, to the river. Cllr Watts felt that there was huge support for the canal in the Issues document and the Plan should show some enthusiastic support for this project, this was agreed but the policy needed to be worded without opening the area up for inappropriate, unwanted development. Cllr Wood had concerns on this policy area.

Cllr Phil Alford had concerns about the tree policies and the criteria for replacement etc, for example asking for a replacement of 3:1 for diseased trees was onerous on the developer and may not be sensible to replace like for like species. The MWPC Clerk explained that s106 agreements already had clauses that ensured that any newly planted trees that died within a certain number of years had to be replaced. There were also queries raised about where the replacement trees should be planted and that a neighbouring site/close vicinity may be better on occasion and this wording would prevent that as the new text said that they had to be replaced on the site; and was contrary to the wording in the Woodland Trust model policies. *"Where it is not possible to secure this new or replacement tree planting within the site, the trees should be planted at a suitable location outside the site"*. Shirley McCarthy advised that when the working party looked at the tree policies, they felt that the wording should say something along the lines of "... replaced within the site, or exceptionally in a different location if appropriate, with agreement". There were also concerns raised by other members that the wording "unacceptable loss" was too subjective to be included in a policy; and that the example quoted should be removed as it was open to interpretation. There was also a discussion on whether trees should be named as a specific species, or container grown or a defined girth but all seemed to agree that they should be well cultivated native species. Cllr Glover summed up that it was agreed that the sentiment was right but the wording needed work, and that Lemon Gazelle should be asked to provide policy wording for the tree policies, in accordance with or to enhance the Core Policy.

Cllr Phil Alford raised some concerns about the new policy EP4 on Renewable Energy Installations, and it was noticed that the words "small-scale" stand alone had been added to the Wiltshire Core Strategy policy 42, but had removed the list of conditions that CP42 had to meet. Shirley McCarthy had worked on this with Cllr Watts and wanted to differentiate between those schemes brought forward by the community and those that the community supported and had come up with the following wording which was different to that previously agreed and that in Cllr Watt's draft being currently looked at: *"Community low carbon initiatives will be encouraged and the Neighbourhood Plan also supports schemes that are not community*



initiated or driven provided extensive local support can be demonstrated and/or provides significant community benefits and providing the cumulative impact assessment is met". The MWPC Clerk had concerns over how community support was demonstrated, as this can often be misinterpreted by representation by the "vocal minority" who attend planning meetings, rather than the "silent majority" and felt it was onerous and difficult for developers of renewable energy installations to demonstrate community support, whereas developers of other types of development did not have to. Shirley McCarthy felt that if it was a controversial development, the onus was on the developer to prove that it was supported locally if it was a commercial project. Some members felt that community-initiated projects were often commercial too; especially if connecting to the National Grid.

The members next looked at the new text for EP5: Water Management & Biodiversity. The MWPC Clerk advised that "Natural Flood Management" was the nationally used term by the Environment Agency and other stakeholders and their definition would be a better description rather than the similar wording currently included. This was agreed.

Cllr Phil Alford raised a concern about the statement under "Environment Action" as possibly cost prohibitive to retrofit energy reduction features to some homeowners considering extensions. This was an aspiration not a policy, and it was agreed that if the aspirational part of the Plan document was to be incorporated alongside objectives and policies in each section then it had to be very clear, and that they should be named "xxxx Aspiration" rather than "xxxx Action".

Cllr John Glover suggested that the best way forward would be to pass on to Lemon Gazelle the wording that had been proposed, and the concerns that members had with it, and ask them to advise.

The Chair, Cllr Richard Wood, asked what the best way forward was. The MWPC Clerk explained that the 3 draft documents had already been sent to Lemon Gazelle but that they had not accepted them at this stage and it will need an officer to work through the 3 documents and amalgamate into one, following the decisions made tonight.

A discussion was held on the Neighbourhood Plan administration which had been shared between the Officers of both councils, and it was acknowledged that MWPC officers had been supporting MTC officers on joint projects during their staffing transition period since last Summer. They were pleased to hear from the PA to the Town Clerk that the Town Council now had staffing capacity but concerns were raised about the impact and the uneven cost effect to the parishioners of Melksham Without as their staff were to date still providing the bulk of the administration support to the Neighbourhood Plan. It was therefore agreed that any additional hours that the Parish Council were paying for was to be charged to the Plan Steering Group funds.

It was agreed that the members were in general agreement with the text reviewed tonight, with the proviso of the issues that had been raised to be addressed via advice from Lemon Gazelle. With regards to the policies on Brownfield sites and the policies relating to the spatial areas, these had been discussed at the working parties with "tracked changes" but in the Environmental section they had been rewritten by Cllr Watts. MWPC Officers suggested that the text needed writing by Lemon Gazelle in "planning speak" and then the potential brownfield sites in the Plan area need testing against the policies to ensure that they "work". These had

been written and agreed with Lemon Gazelle and Wiltshire Council's spatial planning officers and nuances incorporated before filming the website video for brownfield sites, but these had now been rewritten. Cllr Watts explained that the Town Council were defining the "Town Centre" area and that Melksham Without Parish Council needed to define the Employment areas in their parish to feed into these brownfield site policies. The MWPC Clerk explained that Employment Land in the parish was already defined by Wiltshire Council Local Plans and so did not necessarily need looking at and redefining. Cllr Watts asked for officers to seek advice from the Spatial Planning Officer advice on sites that are still occupied but applying for change of use, rather than a brownfield site which is a vacant site previously used; so the policies apply to both types of previous use. Concerns were raised that the new text referred to particularly small and new developments and could prohibit another large or existing company moving to Bowerhill Industrial Estate for example; that the policies could be too restrictive. Whilst the members agreed with the sentiment and desire to proactively attract small and new employers to the industrial area over private retirement homes or housing for example, the policy needed careful wording to ensure that they did not have an unintended consequence and restrict other positive employment in the area. All were agreed that any brownfield sites coming forward in the town centre should be mixed use, and this should be defined by planning use classes. And in fact, it was agreed that areas in the Plan area should have defined planning use classes for potential brownfield sites; so what development will be accepted in the town centre (*mixed use*), residential areas (*residential*) and industrial areas (*industrial/employment*) but defined by planning use class to ensure no ambiguity or misrepresentation; and to cover "change of use" of existing sites as well as brownfield sites which are defined as "previously developed land".


To sum up the following actions were agreed:

- MWPC Officers to accept the agreed "tracked changes" on the draft Plan document and send the document to Lemon Gazelle with queries/issues raised against specific text where advice on policy wording is requested and from the Environment section drafted by Cllr Watts.
- The Town Council to provide an updated version of their draft Town Centre policy and defined Town Centre areas, after a separate meeting with Lemon Gazelle, for the next meeting.

Cllr Watts then took the members through the new layout section, with a one-page Contents page, photos, introduction, the 5 key areas (page 9 on the "Intro" document provided by Cllr Watts) and a member was critical of the current layout and that it lacked images etc and being a "readable" document by the public. The MWPC Clerk reiterated that once the content and policies were agreed, that this was then the next stage to look at photos, maps and images to accompany the approved policy. In addition, the current and layout and flow had been recently changed as a result of a small working group meeting with Lemon Gazelle representatives and then then decision of the Steering Group to follow a new layout plan. Lemon Gazelle had asked several times for a preamble to policies, for a "local flavour"; that is what the working parties had been originally arranged for; but the policies had kept moving; they need to be agreed and no longer amended and added to so that the "enhancement" to the document can be done.

Resolved: *The layout and style in the document provided in a document by Cllr Watts (first 10 pages) as an agenda paper, be accepted as the new layout style and be sent to Lemon Gazelle to change the layout of the draft Plan to be in the same style.*

7. **Late additions to agendas:** A request had been made by Cllr Watts for the agenda to be issued to



members with a request for additional items, and "Any other business" an item on the agenda. Although not a meeting of the parish or town council, the MWPC Clerk advised that the Steering Group would be best to follow their rules as best practice and only discuss items that have been publicly advertised on the agenda as the Steering Group meetings are held in the public domain; this also gave all steering group members the opportunity to research and think about the issues raised. It was agreed that any agenda items needed to be forwarded to the officers in good time for the issue of the agenda a week before the meeting, and that there was no need to last minute additions or additions on the night.

8. **Next meeting date and venue:** It was noted that the next meeting would fall on 24th April, as the last Wednesday in the month but this clashed with the Melksham Area Board meeting, and so the meeting would be held a week later, on Weds 1st May to give the Town Council more time to prepare their Town Centre policy. There was some discussion as to whether alternate meetings would be hosted by the Town Council at a Town venue, but it was agreed to continue at the new Parish Council meeting venue.

The next meeting to be held on Wednesday 1st May, 2019 at 6.00pm at 1, Swift Way.

9. **Website Update:** Colin Harrison left the meeting early as he had a prior commitment and when asked did comment that he was still waiting for the videos for the website. The MWPC Clerk checked that the videos were not holding Colin up, as at present the priority was to work on the policies as the videos were to advertise the forthcoming Regulation 14 consultation, and so needed the policies to be agreed. The delay in sending the videos over were not holding up the development of the website at all.

Signed:



Chairman of MNPSG

Date: 1st May 2019