**MELKSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – TASK GROUP BRIEFING**

**Introduction**

A Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led statutory document, established by the Localism Act, which informs developers what and where they can and cannot build within a plan area – in this case within the Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council boundaries.

Central government and Wiltshire Council have established strategic policies and minimum targets for future for land use development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. This must be achieved by 2026. They cannot be reduced – but may be increased if circumstances are appropriate and extra provision is acceptable to the community.

Once in place, a Neighbourhood Plan gives a local community better control of future development and ensures additional funding for amenities and facilities in local areas. The Plan is not just about new houses.   It also covers provision of employment opportunities, health facilities and local schools, local shops, access to leisure facilities, local bus and rail services, maintaining local roads and managing the traffic.

The Steering Group set up to produce our Neighbourhood Plan is supported by Melksham Without Parish and Melksham Town Councils and by local community groups and individual volunteers,.

A series of public engagement activities, including a two day drop-in Open House event, and the production of a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has resulted in the establishment of five thematic Task Groups. These will work between May and October 2015 looking at a topic in more detail. Their aim is to produce a Report with recommendations for how sites might be assessed for future development.

It is understood that individuals contributing to Task Group activities and deliberations do so in a personal capacity and not as representatives of any body, business or organisation. We are very grateful for your contribution to the work of aTask Group.

**Context**

The Neighbourhood Plan must describe how land will be developed to provide housing, employment, health, education, leisure facilities and other public services and essential infra-structure within the plan boundaries in the future.

Sites considered for such development must be assessed according transparent criteria to evidence why they are supported or rejected.

The public have already shared their comments, ideas and views in a series of surveys and on post-it notes at the drop-in Open House event held at the assembly Hall on 27th and 28th March. These are listed in the Appendix. Further community events are planned at convenient centres and with local interested groups in May–September 2015 during the Task Group deliberation period. Comments made at these will be shared with the Task Group.

The Task Group is required to provide detailed and informed input to the Neighbourhood Plan, taking account of national planning policy and the Wiltshire Core Strategy to which the Plan must accord. To achieve this, the Task Group must work within the established planning framework, liaise with appropriate statutory bodies, seek informed opinion, and research relevant evidence bases to ensure their contribution to the Plan is informed and pertinent.

The Task Group needs to take account of any local issues that are currently in the public domain and might impact on future land use development – such as access, capacity, demand, location, resources. In addition, consideration must be made of the likely impact of land use on the local environment, on climate change, and on the service needs of the elderly and young people – between now and in the future.

**Declaration of Interest**

It is accepted that those participating in Task Group activities are likely to have some personal or professional interest in the topic being considered. Ideally this should be declared as a General Interest.

Any pecuniary interest - such as ownership of land or other relevant asset or receipt of payment for advice, consultancy, fees or employment in relation to any specific issue under discussion - should be declared when the issue is discussed and you should withdraw and not participate in any way in the discussion.

A register of Interests will be maintained by the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Administrator, and will be available in the public domain.

**Code of Conduct**

In considering issues, it is anticipated that Task Groups will face some difficult decisions and that discussion might be challenging at times. Participants are expected to respect all points of views, even if they are not agreeable. Normal rules of debate apply – people should be allowed to have their say and speakers should not make remarks that might be perceived as disrespect or hurtful to others.

The Lead is deemed to ‘Chair’ any Task Group discussions, even when such discussions are held informally.

General notes of meetings will be taken to identify issues discussed, and to report any actions or decisions.

**Key Targets**

1. Draft and broadly agree objectives, terms of reference and way of working to meet deadlines / milestones;
2. Carry out an overview of current facilities, policies and services, and identify issues to be considered;

Identify / collate relevant background information from public domain published sources - census data, Wiltshire Council, JSNA / core / strategic and other policies, local Councils, draft MNPSG Sustainability Appraisal Report; and data from other relevant bodies and service providers;

1. Map location of key sites with Plan area of relevant present / planned facilities / delivery of service to identify gaps in provision;
2. Consider environmental / climate change impact and effect on services for elderly and young people;
3. Identify relevant interest groups within Plan area, and contact them with invitations to comment;
4. Attend community events and meetings with relevant interest groups;
5. Consider comments provided by the public to survey responses and at the Open House and other community events – assessed against (a) direct relevance, (b) implied relevance to future land use and (c) aspirational /general comment;
6. Suggest task relevant criteria for assessing land-use sites for consideration / rejection for new development;
7. Prepare questions for inclusion in a topic specific survey to be carried out in June / September 2015, and consider responses and analysed results;
8. Prepare a written Statement about the topic covered by the Task Group with recommendations in relation to land-use sites for consideration / rejection for new development – **taking account of cross Task Group issues** such as (a) climate change / environmental impact and issues of proposal, and effect of services for the elderly and young people
9. Submit a written Statement to MNPSG **by 30th October 2015**.

**Public Comments**

Comments, ideas and views made in a series of surveys and on post-it notes at the drop-in Open House event held at the Assembly Hall on 27th and 28th March are attached for information Further community events are planned at conveniently centres and with local interested groups in May and September 2015

The Task Group may develop and carry out a related survey plus during the Task Group deliberation period. – and comments made at these will be shared with the Task Group.

The Task Group should be mindful of not creating unrealistic expectations of future facilities. It is suggested that all information and comments are tested against relevance to land use development, recognising that what might not be practical now might later be achieved within the ten year Plan timetable especially if there is any change in legislation or government targets – for example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Directly relevant to land use** | **Indicates potential land use need** | **Information to evidence ‘need’** |
| “ I oppose housing development in Area xxxx ” | “ We need a new xxxxxxx located in xxxx Melksham to improve access ” | There is no public transport making it difficult to access xxxxx services. |

Each Task Group should also have regard for any proposals that are or might be in the pipeline that could impact on land-use development proposals – and how these or any recommendations they may want to make might necessitate maintaining contact with other Groups or with adjoining local parish Councils that might be affected by a proposal.

**Background Population Projection Data – Melksham Community Area Partnership**

It has not been possible to obtain any up-to-date population projections or background data for the specific Neighbourhood Plan designated area to underpin Task Group consideration of their topics.

The best that has been achieved is figures produced in the following table, which covers the Melksham Community Area Partnership area and includes some surrounding parishes.

These are reported by Wiltshire Council on the Wiltshire Intelligence Network website. In addition to general population statistics, the website also has specific pages that correlate to Task Group interests.

The table in the attached Annex estimates output for 2001 and 2009, the latter year forming the starting point for the annual projections shown for the remainder of the projected period. Estimates and projections are calculated using a 2001 Census base for each Community Area (using 01/04/2009 Community Area boundaries). They incorporate ONS mid-year estimates 2001-2009, Vital Statistics of births and deaths 2001-2009, Patient Registration Statistics and ONS 2008 based Sub-National Population Projections.

Assumptions for future levels of births, deaths and migration are based on observed levels mainly over the previous five years. They show what the population will be if recent trends continue. Special populations shown above are independently controlled to pre-defined age structures and population totals. All population figures have been rounded independently to the nearest 10. 0 signifies less than 5. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

**NOTE: The trend-based projections on which the table is based do not incorporate any housing policy figures, and instead use recent trends to anticipate future populations.** The figures in the table should therefore be regarded as trend indicators rather than accurate figures and treated with caution – the population growth of 1040 between 2010 and 2015 seems low given the number of housing completions.

Source

*Developed by Bradford Council, the University of Manchester and Andelin Associates. The report was compiled from a forecast produced on 27/10/2010 using POPGROUP software*

