

SHERSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STEERING GROUP MEETING

Notes of Meeting held on
Thursday 30th March 2017
Sherston Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Present:

Steering Group Chairman - John Matthews (JM),
Admin support – Sarah Wood (SW)
Steering Group Members – Mike Johnson (MJ), John Knight (JK), Graham Morris (GM), Harry Stevens (HS), Dr Pip Petit (PP), Judy Sharp (JS), Nigel Freeth (NF), Graham Hayman (GH), John Thomson (JT), Polly Clements (PC) Rob Johnson (RJ)

Alternative Options Group (AOG) - : Alex Ross (AR), Zoe Metcalfe (ZM)
Members of public – 6

Definitions: NP = Neighbourhood Plan; WC = Wiltshire Council; SG = Steering Group; Q = question; A = answer; C = comment.

1. Apologies

Apologies sent from Saara Sharman

2. Register of interests

None.

3. Update from John Matthews and Mike Johnson

At the last meeting it was agreed that ZM and AR would be given six weeks to look at alternative options for the NP that would still deliver a new surgery, land for the pre-school and a primary school expansion, and CIL funding for improved sports facilities but with possibly fewer houses. The main purpose of this meeting was for the AOG to report back on their findings.

4. Update from Alternative Options Group

ZM began by thanking the SG for all the hard work they have undertaken on the NP and for the opportunity to look into alternative options at this stage. Over the last six weeks she has worked with AR and her team at ARUP (the company she works for), to look into the following;

Current SG NP -

The team have looked at the existing SG proposal, and considered the uplift of traffic and impact on the village if the proposed development went ahead. ZM believes that the current proposal will generate significant additional traffic. She tabled a plan showing how it might be possible to resolve this. After examining previous NP studies and documents her team have sought to come up with other options that would still deliver a new surgery, site for the pre-school and extra land for the school for any future expansion but with fewer houses and less impact on the traffic issues.

Proposal – in brief summary

To reduce the scale of the development, by only using 4 out of the 9 acres of the site.

Provide block of 29 assisted living community apartments for the elderly in the village instead of 45 individual houses as in the current plan. This would ease the uplift of traffic on the site due to not only less houses but fewer parked cars at the assisted living building - due to the age of the people living in the apartments (where they believe car ownership would be minimal). There would be land for the new pre-school and any future school expansion and car parking.

They also suggested a vehicle drop off at school which they believe would ease the impact of the increased traffic and current school parking situation and major improvements to the local roads, pavements and access to the site

ZM circulated draft plans to the group; there were two options which differed in their access and road schemes. The plans show a smaller scale development with a surgery, potential new pre-school site, land for any future school expansion and a large building which is the 29 assisted living apartments. Also included was a new traffic system which would make Court Street and Green Lane one way, which they consider would improve safety. Any improvements needed would in her view be funded by the developer via section 106 contributions (now CIL). The group believe their scheme is viable.

Q- MJ –How did the AOG come to the conclusion that there was a need for assisted living? As this hasn't come up in any studies that the SG have undertaken in the 5 years it has been working on the NP.

A- ZM – They have looked at demographics and believe that there is a need.

C- A member of the public Mrs Wilson spoke up and commented that the village needs more houses for young people and families and affordable houses, not just for the elderly.

C - Mr Robinson a member of the public informed the group that he had contacted WC for current housing list in Sherston and was told it was 3.

C- Mrs Wilson replied that it is not just social housing needed in the village but affordable!

JT responded by stating that some people who had been on the list were removed as they actually wanted affordable housing and were not eligible for social housing.

PP believes that there is a definite need for smaller houses/units as there are people in the position that would move if there was a suitable alternative smaller house option, this in turn could help free up some family housing stock.

Viability of proposed alternative scheme

AR ran through the initial estimated outline financials on the viability of the scheme. He advised that full details of such will be made available once they have been refined following the publication of further plan detail by the AOG.

5. Questions -

Q- JT mentioned that with this new proposal that there would still need to be a significant percentage of affordable homes. WC has a policy of 40% which it has to meet. He also asked whether the figures quoted based on the market value of the assisted living apartments. Also with this alternative scheme would the ownership of the surgery in time come to the village like with the Steering Groups NP proposal?

A – AR answered that the surgery would be privately owned and not come back to community ownership. Scheme tabled did not include any allowance for affordable housing.

Q- NF asked the AOG if they have talked to WC and the landowners, as that is crucial before any figures can be realistically worked out.

A – AR answered that as yet they haven't spoken to either WC or the landowners due to a limited

time scale.

JM agreed with NF that speaking to the landowners is crucial regarding delivery and land value so as to establish whether scheme is actually viable and surprised that at this stage a meeting had not taken place.

JT – Part of a NP is to guide and to protect a community from unwanted development. If the proposed NP doesn't meet the criteria of providing a number and range of houses, it could be dismissed and would not future-proof the village. At that point there is nothing stopping the landowners of this site or any site in the village selling land to developers which could result in many more houses that was stated in the Steering Group proposal.

C – GH commented that the new AOG proposal was an interesting one however was concerned that it doesn't provide houses for young people. Mr Robinson a member of the public disagreed and said that the Steering Groups proposal seemed only to have 4 and 5 bedroom houses.

GM – This is not the case – the SG proposal incorporates a mixture of 2, 3, 4 and 5 bed houses.

Q- HS asked ZM and AR why they think the new scheme works.

A- ZM responded that ARUP believe this new proposed scheme would fit the criteria of the NP and have highlighted concerns regarding the existing proposal. They consider that a thorough Traffic Assessment should have been undertaken.

MJ responded that the SG sought advice on this matter (following their comments on this matter at the last SG meeting) not only from WC but from other professional planners who specialise in Neighbourhood Plans. All had advised that a Traffic Assessment was not needed at this stage of the NP process. This is something that would be expected to be undertaken if and when a planning application was submitted.

ZM disagreed with this and suggested that a Traffic Assessment is required. ARUP also feel that the problem with the site in question due to its agricultural land could open up other sites to developers, and suggested that other sites may be more suitable. She did not specify where.

Q - MJ asked if ARUP had visited the site or village?

A – ZM replied that at this current time they had not visited the village but had used Google maps to help them with the plans.

Q- JT asked ZM how they were going to work around the existing high pressure water main as they can't build over it.

A- ZM informed JT that they had looked at the water main and didn't see it as an issue. JT (and others) disagreed.

Q -RJ thinks the new proposal makes sense in many ways but does not address other factors that the NP has taken on board over the years. One factor is looking out for young people in the village and helping small business retain young workers and apprentices by enabling young workers to live in the village. How does this new proposal meet these criteria?

A – ZM replied that it was possible to have a mixture of apartments for the elderly and the young. This model works as has been shown to work in Scandinavia.

JT believes that the best way to provide assisted living is in Extra Care units which are buildings that not only house units but have cafes, communal spaces and other facilities. WC has been building

these all over Wiltshire and is proving to be very successful and popular.

MJ would like to see more design detail regarding the assisted living building, as it looks a very large unit and high density for the size of plot.

5. Surgery –

Q- PP asked AR whether the developer would sell on the surgery to a private company once built. If so there has been many cases in the country when by selling to a private company has resulted in serious problems for surgeries regarding control.

A- AR explained that this can be resolved by very tight leases.

Discussion then took place about parking and how many spaces are required for the doctors. PP explained that the requirement that is set by the government is different from the reality of how many patients would actually visit. PP also mentioned that the dispensary would have to be on site as it is not a pharmacy.

C –Mrs Wilson spoke that having disabled children and the lack of disabled access at the current surgery , a new building could not come soon enough and she is finds the delay worrying.

A – ZM totally understands the concern and the group do not want to prolong the process.

6. Land Value of Site –

JT explained that the current SG plan has been put forward to WC Cabinet and in principle been approved. If a new proposal was to be put forward this would again need approval. Discussion then took place about the difference in the sale price if the scheme was a commercial venture or if it was a community led scheme like the current SG NP proposal.

7. Traffic and road improvements

Discussion then moved on to the traffic, road improvements and related additional infrastructure costs which ZM feels strongly about. ZM commented that if any surgery was built on this site then the pavements on Knockdown Road, and roads leading to the site would need to be improved (some of which are currently in a poor condition) - especially as the elderly and disabled use the pavements to get to the new surgery.

C – Mrs Wilson commented that she already pushes a heavy wheel chair all around the village and finds it acceptable except the Jubilee Triangle area which is not accessible to wheel chair users.

A – ZM still believes that pavements are in a bad condition and need improvement and that a traffic survey /assessments are vital.

C – Mr Martin a member of the public mentioned that he thinks traffic needs to be looked at and it is not as simple as moving one problem area on to another area.

Q – Mr Shipsey a member of the public asked whether the NP could be approved through the correct channels as in the site and proposal but not commit to the exact numbers of houses until a later stage. This would allow the Plan to be in place but the group /village to still have the option of working out the finer details regarding the site later on down the line.

C – GH commented that there is already a proposal that was accepted by 94% of the village who were for the new surgery and the houses and the SG has a mandate and it should follow it through.

C – Mr Robinson mentioned that in the initial housing needs survey the number of houses that the village quoted was needed was 10.

A -RS replied that when this initial question and survey was undertaken the question was about social housing and also the scheme with the possible outcome of the new surgery was not on the table.

C – Mrs Wilson commented that not all people who said yes on the survey only said yes to houses as they wanted to keep the surgery. Most people she knows ticked yes as they would like to see more houses and a new purpose built surgery.

Q- JM asked if improvements to sporting facilities had been considered with the AOG scheme?

A – ZM , the team have looked at the potential developer contributions (CIL)and have factored this in.

7. Way forward –

AR told the group that the AOG need to do more work as currently there is no certainty that their new proposal is viable, they will need to speak to landowners. JM is concerned with this proposal that the ownership of the surgery will become an issue regarding its viability and ownership, and the fact that the village would never own the building. AR replied that there are pros and cons to a community owning such a building, such as if it should become vacant. JT responded that he believes there will never be a problem renting it, look at the success of the Old school building. AR said that he will look into a model where the surgery ends up with the community.

JT suggested it may be possible to proceed with current SG plan and in the meantime AOG could talk to landowners regarding the site and proposal. MJ is concerned how much extra time would be needed? And also would like to see more clarification over the assisted living as it's not a need that came out with any studies undertaken previously. JT suggested talking to social services.

Q - HS asked ZM how more houses for young people could be factored in to the equation? If they are factored in then that would presumably have an impact on the amount of cars and car parking needed?

A – ZM replied that the AOG could look at this in more depth. However she can only take as far as what has been done with her team is as much as she can ask. Any further in depth studies such as the traffic assessment will need to be undertaken by professionals and this will cost.

JM told the group that AOG are saying that a traffic assessment has to be done. However the SG have been advised by both WC and NP professionals that this is not needed at this point and that the SG can press on to the next stage without one.

JM thanked AR, ZM and her team for all their work on the alternative proposal but for it to be taken further it has to be shown to be deliverable and at this stage, there is not enough facts and figures to show that it is. It is evident that more money will be needed if the further assessments that ZM mentioned are to be undertaken. However it is unlikely to come out of the current SG funding pot as what is left is being allocated for the referendum. ZM and AR will give JM more details on costs and viability, and clarification on assisted living within the next couple of weeks. JM thanked everyone for attending and SW will be in touch regarding the next meeting date.

Meeting finished at 9.10pm