

SHERSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STEERING GROUP

Notes of Meeting

Monday 15th December in Sherston Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Present:

Mr John Matthews (JM), Mr Mike Johnson (MJ), Mr John Thomson (JT), Mrs Sarah Wood (SW), Mr John Knight (JK), Mr Anthony Price (AP), Mr Graham Hayman (GH), Mr Harry Stevens (HS), Dr Pip Petit (PP), Mr Rob Johnson (RJ), Mr Kevin Smith (KS), Mr Graham Morris (GM), Mr Nigel Freeth (NF)

1. Apologies

Apologies were given from Mr James Pyle, Mrs Jo Curson and Mr Steve Harvey.

2. Update

JM and MJ have met up with Wiltshire Council (WC) and been advised that if Sherston did not prepare and publish a draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) by early next year, the village NP process will be taken over by events, with WC having to include Sherston in their Housing Site Allocation Plan (incorporating one or more sites in the village) as they are under pressure from the government to deliver additional land for new housing.

MJ asked the Steering group if they all wished to carry on and aim for February 2016, they all agreed. MJ has produced a draft form of the plan; there are a few gaps that need to be filled once information from other parties has been received, however the goal to have a draft version ready for February 2016 is possible.

There has been two sub-committee meetings held previously and notes of those meetings have been circulated to all on the Steering Group. MJ has produced an update and briefing note which has also been sent to all.

3. Update on individual sites

Site 1A – The Wiltshire Council option land -This site has been identified as the preferred location for the new GP surgery, an extension to the primary school and possible location for a pre-school facility. In addition WC has indicated that it would like to build 10 elderly persons bungalows on the site. There have been legal issues with the original agreement between WC and the landowners however JT informed the parish council that all parties are working towards an agreeable solution. There is to be a meeting on 17th December with WC and the landowners which will provide more information essential to the NP.

At the Steering group meeting JT confirmed that funding is secured for the elderly units and that WC can provide the site for the surgery. However the funding of the building will be decided by the Capital Assets Group at WC who has control of central funds. One possible way to provide the capital is to have private housing on the site or on adjoining site 1B.

The question was asked if building a new surgery would open up the village to a substantial amount of development. The new surgery's planned remit is to retain the same size, built to meet the needs of the current population, not more. A new fit for purpose surgery safeguards the practice for the future. JT mentioned that if WC is unable to fund a new surgery it does unfortunately make everything more complicated. JT will give an update when available. MJ reminded the group that the role of the NP is identifying needs and to deliver where possible. Who delivers it is not the issue but securing a site is.

Site 1B – Moody Land – Although not originally identified as one of the preferred options by the Steering Group, it has now been identified in the site assessment as the most sustainable location of the remaining potential development sites. As it forms the northern half of site 1 it is considered logical to reconsider the development potential of this site and not least the significant ‘planning gain’ that could be achieved if the enlarged site were able to not only meet future housing needs but also help achieve some of the key objectives as identified during the NP process. More information on the potential of this site will be given after the meeting on the 17th December.

Site 3 – the land to the West of the football Field (site 4) – This land has been recently sold to a private individual in the village for use as a pony paddock/stables. Discussions held with the landowners suggest that in the longer term whether they might consider making this land available as a possible extension to the Football Field. Consideration could be given to preserving this option via an appropriate safeguarding allocation in the NP.

Site 4 - Football Field Site - Previously this was one of the favoured sites for development as it is land owned by the Parish Council. However after looking at the original deeds there is a covenant that would make the possibility of any new build housing (or other) development on this site very complicated and unlikely, even if the sports facilities were moved to another site. WC could be asked to consider removing the covenant or doing some sort of deal to share the potential asset value- however this would take time and time is what the NHP does not have. Had the site been chosen for development of some kind it could potentially have funded vastly improved sports facilities elsewhere. MJ explained that the existing sports field could nevertheless be improved by possible developer’s contributions if new homes are built elsewhere in the village (via CIL contributions or some sort of direct linked requirement on say an adjoining housing allocation). Once funding such as this is secured it becomes easier to apply for funding from other organisations such as Sport England.

If the NP is going to include a proposal to improve/enhance existing sports/leisure facilities in the village it is essential that a more detailed analysis of what is required be prepared. GH has done some initial investigation and although public interest is evident the current ‘sports field’ is split into various groups and any new facilities would need a management team to oversee the day to day running of the site. Foxley – Tagg could be asked to undertake a feasibility study regarding the site and possible improvements to the sports facilities.

There is a piece of land also owned by the Moody’s that connects Site 4 and 3, between the sport field and the pony paddock. JT will bring this up at the meeting on 17th December.

Site 14 – land adjoining Pyke Boarding Kennels (off Knockdown Road) - The owners of this site have tabled a proposal showing this site being developed for a combination of general housing (10 units) with land set aside (at no cost) for the erection of the GP surgery and a new Village Hall. This site scored poorly in the Site Assessment undertaken by Foxley-Tagg, not least because of its poor pedestrian and vehicular access. WC has informally advised that they consider the site too remote from the village for the suggested uses. The Steering group agreed with both Foxley – Tagg and WC.

Site 6, North of Sandpits Lane - The owners of this land have now indicated that they would be willing to consider releasing some of their land for use as replacement/additional playing fields – but would wish at least part of their site developed for housing. The Steering Group previously indicated that this was an option worth considering – and was presented as such at the exhibition last year (as part of a mixed use development option).

If Site 4 is no longer deemed capable of being redeveloped during the plan period – there is no need to seek to identify a site for replacement playing fields. The Steering Group must now consider whether it wishes to allocate this site for housing development only. (N.B. it is assumed that only the land fronting Sandpits Lane would be so allocated in the NP – if this option was deemed acceptable). The Site Assessment carried out by Foxley-Tagg gave this site a much lower score than any of the other sites still being considered for housing.

At the Steering Group meeting concerns were expressed about the lack of services in this area and impact on Traffic on Sandpits Lane.

Site 10 - The Vicarage. NF informed the Group that the Diocese has given the green light to the planned development. A site meeting was held and plans drawn up. The current vicarage would be refurbished and sold and two additional dwellings on the vicarage site will be built. One to be the new vicarage and the other sold to fund development. In addition land would be set aside for additional burial space.

ACTION – MJ asked NF for a copy of the plans as soon as they become available.

Site 11 – Land at corner of Green Lane and Sandpits Lane. This site is shown allocated for housing development in the current Local Plan. The Steering Group previously resolved to maintain this allocation (for about 4 units).

JT asked the group to think about including Anthony Close in the plan, so that the site can be retained in the future for elderly houses with redevelopment potential to make homes extra care units and fit for purpose. The group agreed to include this in the plan; it is also a way of safeguarding the site.

4. Which of the following allocations should be included in the Draft NP?

- **Site 10 (Vicarage) – site allocated for a mixture of housing (total 3 units) and burial space.**
– All of the steering group were in favour for Site 10 to be in plan.
- **Site 11 (Corner Green Lane) – site allocated for housing (total 4 units)** – All in favour for this Site 11 to be included in plan
- **Site 1A (rear new school) – mixed use allocation comprising land set aside for: extension to primary school and/or for new build pre-school facility; new GP surgery; 10 elderly persons bungalows (total 10 units)**– The group all agreed that they are unable to make an informed decision on Site 1A/B until after the meeting on 17th December has taken place.
- **Site 1A + (rear new school) – mixed use allocation as per 1A above plus an additional 10 houses on the immediately adjoining land (total 20 units) – with the rest of Site 1B set aside as a longer term reserve (for development beyond 2026) – As above.**
- **Sites 1A and 1B combined – mixed use allocation as per 1A above plus (total 40 units): an area of Public Open Space; significant landscaping along the western site boundary; financial contributions towards improvements to existing sports facilities on Site 4.** (N.B. Sites 1A, 1B and 4 could comprise a single allocation – to ensure that the desired improvements to the sports facilities are linked to the new build housing development). – As above
- **Site 6 (part fronting Sandpits Lane) – frontage only allocated for 10 houses** – The group have concerns regarding this site as mentioned previously, so at the meeting no decision was made.
- **Site 14 (land off Knockdown Road) – mixed use allocation for 10 houses plus land set aside for the erection of a new village hall and GP surgery** – All of the group agreed not to include Site 14 in the plan, for the reasons given previously in the meeting.

- **Site 3 (land to west of Football Field) – site allocated for future expansion of sports facilities** –The Steering Group agreed to seek to safeguard this land for future sports purposes.
- **Site 4 – The Football Field, Knockdown Road** –Due to the covenant in place, the group resolved not to include Site 4 in the plan as a site for housing development; however will be included regarding the potential to improve facilities.

5. Numbers. When the whole steering group last met in 2014, the numbers being put forward by WC for a village like Sherston was 16. This was derived from a complicated method involving the draft core strategy and an analysis of village population size. WC now recommend that this figure be changed – to take into account the latest analysis of the residual housing requirement (116 dwellings) and the simple assumption that each of the five “Large Villages” in the Malmesbury Community Area is expected to deliver a similar number of dwellings – i.e. in the region of 23 homes. The big question is how many homes should we be planning for in the NP- 16, 20 or more?

JT mentioned when thinking of how many homes, the group will need to know the affordability of infrastructure for Site 1A/1B. This area of land is complex and expensive which will dictate how many homes could be built. It may not be economical to build small scale, however if the development was phased into two parts, the infrastructure could be put in place for the whole site, allowing for future development. Also we may need to consider how many private houses would be needed to deliver a new surgery?

After the meeting on 17th December and once WC have prepared plans, it may be clearer, realistically how many houses (max figure) could be built on sites 1A and 1B. WC currently believes that site 1A and possibly a bit of 1B is adequate for Sherston’s need at this present time.

Discussion then took place regarding how many new homes should be built, facilities and sustainability. A member of the public asked for the group when making a decision to consider the 2012 Housing Needs survey which results stated that there was a need for 20 new homes. KS informed the group that over the last 20 years since living in the village 80 homes have been built and they have still lost businesses such as a butcher, a bakers and a pub. RJ thinks there should be more affordable housing to enable young people to work and live in the village. Safeguarding employment is also very important. It seems the village does want to protect the assets, facilities and open spaces that it has, and policies can be put in plan to enable this.

Although no real estimate can be given at this stage, members of the steering group were asked to do an initial vote regarding how many new homes they would want to see in Sherston. They were to vote for either a low level (26) or a higher level (40).

- 8 members voted for high, 2 members voted for low, 1 abstention

This question will be revisited at the next meeting, once all information is available to the group.

More discussion then took place and AP made the point that the plan has to be attractive to get the Yes vote and believes by having less areas of development, fewer sites makes it more palatable. Many agreed with this view. It was agreed that the village need to know the situation regarding the importance of the plan, the vulnerable position that the village is currently in and what would happen if the NP failed at the referendum.

6. FUTURE ACTIONS– JT to report back to MJ and JM after 17th December. A meeting date will then be sent in early January. MJ will be asking for help as if the group is to reach the target of completing a draft plan by Feb-March he will need help. It will be an impossible task otherwise.

Meeting finished at 9.40pm. Notes taken by SW.