

SHERSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
Exhibition/Workshop
Notes of presentations on Saturday 20th September 2014
At 11am Sherston Village Hall

Summary

On Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st the village hall was opened up for several hours during which time members of the public were invited to: viewboards displaying information on the Neighbourhood Plan; hear presentations on the planning process so far, sites that have been put forward, sites being considered and advantages and disadvantages of each site; and participate in an open forum. Questionnaires were provided giving the public an opportunity to express preferences, comments and suggestions on the Neighbourhood Plan at this present time.

During the weekend exactly 100 members of the public signed in and visited the exhibition. The following are detailed notes of the two workshop sessions that took place on the Saturday. These were both organised and facilitated by people listed below as present. The introduction and presentation themes were common to both and separated out are the Public Questions from each session.

Present

Mr J Matthews (JM) - Chairman

Mrs Sarah Wood (SW) - Admin Support

Mrs Sally Tagg (ST) – Foxley Tagg

Mr Mike Johnson (MJ) Steering Group member

Definitions: “NHP” = Neighbourhood Plan; “Q” = Question

Introduction

JM welcomed all for coming and explained that the purpose of the weekend and the workshop was for information gathering, not decision making or voting. It was an opportunity for members of the public to give their views on the future of their village. JM gave a quick summary of the NHP and the Steering Groups’ function. (Note: the information in the hall is also available on the website and will be put on display at both the church and the GP surgery over the coming weeks – until 11th October).

Core Strategy

ST from Foxley Tagg introduced herself and her role in town planning and how she is helping Sherston with its NHP. ST explained that the Core Strategy has a requirement that the Parish takes on a certain number of houses within the Malmesbury Area between now and 2026. The residual number of new units that the Core Strategy proposes be built in Sherston taking into account recent completions and outstanding commitments is presently 16 (sixteen). Sherston residents need to question if they are happy with this figure or would they want more development? Which sites to choose depend on how many houses the community wish to see built, for example if the figure of 16 is chosen as indicated in the Core Strategy, are there potentially small sites suitable for these? If a greater number is chosen, e.g. 25-30, then a bigger site or more sites will be needed. Disadvantages /advantages of site options were then presented.

Presentation of Sherston Site Options

Presented were all the sites put forward for consideration by local landowners and othersite options. MJ, a member of the Steering Group, said that when the Steering Group initially looked at sites they soon realised they needed independent advice and guidance for scoring and analysing them. All of the sites were analysed and scored by Foxley Tagg using standard planning criteria and an accepted methodology. The sites that scored well were then identified as potential sites for the

Steering Group to consider further. These were all subjected to a SWOT analysis – out of which 6 sites were selected for further more detailed consideration.

Some of the high scoring sites, such as the allotments, the recreation ground, and land behind village hall, were considered by both Foxley Tagg and the Steering Group as being important and significant to the village. These were therefore not included in final list of option sites.

ST explained some sites may be appropriate for uses other than houses, for example the land behind the school on Sopworth Lane has been identified as perfect for school expansion if needed in the future. The pre-school may also wish to be next to the school and by making this provision it safeguards this land for that purpose in the future. The land near the school may also be a suitable site for the new surgery. This land is owned by Wiltshire Council who has plans to put 10 units for elderly persons possibly on this land. This is separate from the NHP due to time scale.

One site that is different from the other sites under consideration is the sportsfield. It is owned by the parish council. Any funds from the delivery of a development on that site could be ploughed back into the community. The other sites are mostly privately owned and although there will be development contributions made, it will not be on the same scale. If the sportsfield was chosen for housing these facilities would have to be sited elsewhere, so that is another question the village would have to think about if this site was chosen as an option.

MJ explained that the vicarage site is owned by the Diocese. The current vicarage is in sizeable plot. If the existing dwelling were removed, the site would be suitable for a new vicarage, a new burial ground and limited development which would help fund a new vicarage.

Conclusion / Next Steps

As a conclusion to both presentations, ST asked the members of the public to complete two questionnaires: (a) on Site Options, and (b) Planning Priorities. The questionnaires were circulated showing Planning priorities, matters of principle, policies created to protect services, land areas in the village and what the community would like to see protected.

If not completed in the hall, they could be returned to the post office. There would be a box in the post office from Monday. There were also leaflets regarding the future of the surgery. The display boards would be in the village hall until Sunday afternoon, after which the surgery have offered to display the information. The Church had also been asked.

JM reiterated the village has an opportunity now to protect and safeguard services and select the level of development that it wished. It is up to the village to decide how best to do this.

JM thanked ST and MJ for all their work on the workshop/exhibition.

A member of the public thanked the Steering Group for the amount of time and effort that they have given to the NHP and it should be commended.

JM finally thanked all members of the public for attending. JM repeated the request for residents to complete the questionnaires and to spread the word to other residents as it is vital that feedback and views of the village are given.

Notes taken by S. Wood

Presentation 1: (11:00 a.m. to 12:10 p.m) 20 members of the public attended. Public questions

Q: A member of the public asked if there has been any consideration regarding the impact on the community and its infrastructure such as parking , drainage, school places etc if any large development should get the go ahead.

MJ: Assessments have been carried out on each site, regarding drainage and none of the sites came back problematic. If and when a site is chosen for potential development, more detailed assessment will be undertaken, such as impact on neighbours, parking etc.

Of the 16 houses indicated as being required to meet the minimum level stated in the Core Strategy , 10 of these are likely be for the elderly as reported recently by Wiltshire Council who are planning to build 10 units in Sherston for the elderly and the young. This is separate from the NHP due to the time scale but if built this will mean that only 6 houses will theoretically be required to be built over the remaining plan period (to 2026). Is this enough?

The question that the village needs to ask itself is that if no more houses are built what is the likely effect on the school, the shops, and the public houses.

Q: A member of the public reported that as properties lower and behind Easton Town are not on mains drainage and have septic tanks that site 17 shown in lower Easton Town would surely also have drainage issues if chosen for development.

MJ: Bristol Water has already been consulted on this and they indicated that if the development was big enough technically mains drainage could be installed direct to the sewage works. All depends on the scale of the development.

Q: What was the impact on road structure and on already congested lanes and streets if development took place? An example given was Green Lane which witnesses a lot of school traffic at the end & start of the school day; this and Sandpits Lane are frequently used as rat runs.

MJ: The Steering group welcome these points and will take note of problem areas but one thing that the NHP can't do is give detailed solutions to issues such as the location of each speed bump or sign, but it can flag up the problems.

ST: The plan will deal with the overall issues once and if the community selected a site. The scale, design, drainage implications, parking etc will all then be looked at in greater detail. The developer's contribution such as via section 106 agreements can help greatly when dealing with problems such as those mentioned.

A Neighbourhood Plan would potentially have a design code setting out what Sherston wants in a new development, issues like the Green Lane traffic would be taken on board and dealt with in a different forum.

The point of the weekend exhibition and workshop is to think about what you want your village to be like in the future, holistic vision not independent. The Steering Group's role is to co-ordinate information received from the community. It needs as many views as possible only then with enough feedback can the plan progress further and decisions be made. It is up to the villagers to decide what it wants in their own village NHP.

Q: It was asked what the time scale is for the NHP?

MJ: This is in part dependent on the level of interest and feedback the Steering Group receives. If not enough feedback is given, many more events and consultations will need to be carried out, thus pushing back the time scale.

The time scale that the Steering Group are working toward is April/ May 2015. There would be a 6 week formal consultation on the draft plan involving local authorities, councils, Bristol Water, Wildlife agencies, etc. After comments have been evaluated the steering group can decide on what changes need to be made. The draft plan then goes to Wiltshire Council to approve and then followed by analysis from an independent inspector. Only if it is approved by this inspector will it be able to go to the village for referendum. The NHP would only be adopted if over 50% of those voting vote yes, if the answer is no then, the NHP would have to be redone.

The point of a NHP is to give some form of protection to the village. What is included in that plan is up to the public. It allows the village to be more in control of its future and where it would like development to take place. If there is no plan in place it allows developers to choose where they wish to build, and how many it wishes to build as what has happened in Malmesbury.

Q: What happens if the village decides on the minimum number and the NHP is adopted, but 10 years later (i.e. due to local amenities struggling) the village decide it wants more development; can the plan be amended or reviewed? Is it not better to be conservative to start with when housing numbers are involved?

MJ: As the NHP is new, it is not apparent whether plans can be reviewed easily. The problem is that government's change, policies change, pressures change so what may be an accepted figure now may no longer be accepted figure in the future. It makes more sense to have greater flexibility in a plan. If for example 16 was chosen as mentioned previously and the 10 elderly units are built, that leaves 6 more units over 20 years. Is that realistically enough? Maybe it is, but it is something the village need to think about.

Q: How will referendum be carried out?

MJ: The community will be asked to consider the finished NHP and vote if they want to adopt it or not'

Q: Can the plan be rejected if not enough people gave views?

ST: If not enough events, consultations and engagement were carried out then yes, but if adequate engagement does take place but attendance and feedback is low, then no it can't be rejected unless the figure of engagement was zero or one.

Q: Have the senior group been targeted?

JM: When the steering group was set up in 2012, a cross section of the community were asked to join, including a representative for the seniors, a representative for the surgery, farmers, business

owners, etc. A public meeting was held with the senior members of the community on 12th March 2013 but another event can be held again.

ST asked the public to let the steering group know how it likes to receive communications, leaflets through doors, website, in the newsletter or events like this. A member of the public suggested that a separate leaflet in the Cliffhanger would be useful another suggestion made was an online survey.

Presentation 2: (2pm to 3.10pm) 19 members of the public attended. Public questions

Q: Clarification was asked about the figure of 16 and if the plans for houses on the vicarage site, and new elderly units were included in the figure for new builds?

MJ: The site options tabled for new homes are all new allocations and would come out of the figure of 16 if built.

Q: A member of the public asked if the potential number of houses per site written next to each site was an exact figure.

MJ: If any individual option site was chosen more specific detail would have to be given. The figure currently given is an approximate number. If a site was chosen, a design code could be put in place which would give direction for build, so can blended into existing settlement.

Q: It was asked that if the new units are built by Wiltshire Council will there be stricter control when allocating affordable housing as in the past local occupancy has been over looked. They also went on to say the felt 16 was enough.

JM: Yes the new units will be solely for locals.

Q:What is the timescale for feedback?

MJ: This is in part dependent on the level of interest and feedback the Steering Group receives. If not enough feedback is received, many more events and consultations may need to be carried out, thus pushing back the time scale.

MJ: The time table that the Steering Group are working to is aimed at being completed by April/ May 2015, there would be a 6 week formal consultation on the draft plan involving local authorities , councils, Bristol Water, Wildlife agencies etc. After comments have been evaluated the steering group can decide on what changes need to be made. The draft plan then goes to Wiltshire Council to approve and then followed by analysis from an independent inspector. Only if it is approved by this inspector will it be able to go to the village for referendum. The NHP would only be adopted if over 50% of those voting vote yes, if the answer is no then, the NHP would have to be redone.

Q: It was asked if the plan will have any scope for provision of business units.

JM: There will be policy in the plan to safeguard businesses but no provision at the moment.

Q: A member of the public feared Sherston will become a small town if more than 16 houses were developed.

MJ: The amount of houses is up to the village to decide. No pressure other than perhaps the figure of 16 as per the residual requirement in the Core Strategy.

Q: It was asked why Sherston and not villages like Luckington were required to build more homes

MJ: Wiltshire Council has selected 5 large villages in the Malmesbury Area which had existing facilities for limited further development. Villages such as Sherston and Ashton Keynes were chosen as they could cope and benefit from more homes. Villages like Luckington fall below this threshold.

Q: A concern was raised that the surgery was only seeking bigger premises to seek more patients?

MJ: The surgery needs to be fit for purpose; it needs to be able to provide more services and facilities to safeguard its future in the village. It needs more services not patients, the surgery explain all in the leaflets provided.

Discussion then took place regarding possible sites for the surgery in the village and the fact that the allotment site will not be considered for development and will remain where it is. ST explained that there is a balance between growth and stagnation, to what extent does the village want growth, not just now for future proofing the village for future generations.

Q: The question was asked is there a geographical area stopping developers building outside of that boundary?

MJ: The NP area is the parish, if a neighbouring parish decided to build 500 houses it of course will have an impact on this village. The settlement boundary as redefined will limit development beyond the village.

Q: Would traffic /parking control be considered in the plan?

MJ: There could be a policy within the plan. However the village could also identify a site for extra parking provision in the village, if development was to happen on Wiltshire Council owned land. An area could be provided for overspill parking. There could be a provision for more parking near the school and surgery if the surgery was built near the school.

Q: Is there any guidance from other towns, villages that have already compiled a NHP?

MJ: One suggested policy has already been adapted from another NHP, the Steering Group constantly looking at other successful plans. The experience that ST brings to the group is vital. The idea of developing on community owned land for example is not unique and has been undertaken by other communities elsewhere.

Q: What if a piece of land is chosen and included in the NHP but the landowner then changes his mind?

MJ: This is a possibility. If the plan is solely reliant on one piece of land that is why it is good to have alternatives to allow a bit of flexibility - something the village needs to think about.