

SHERSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STEERING GROUP MEETING

Notes of Meeting held on
Monday 12th December
Pinkney Park at 7.30 pm

Present:

John Matthews (JM), Mike Johnson (MJ), Sarah Wood (SW), John Knight (JK), Graham Morris (GM), Judy Sharp (JS), Nigel Freeth (NF), Graham Hayman (GH), John Thomson (JT), Polly Clements (PC),
NP /Plan = Neighbourhood Plan
WC – Wiltshire Council
2 members of the public were present.

1. Apologies

Apologies sent from Harry Stevens.

2. Register of interests

None.

3. Update

JM explained that the purpose of the meeting is to update the group on what has occurred since the last full steering group meeting on 15th November. To summarise what is to be discussed at the meeting:

- Construction of the surgery, Viability Study and general update
- Wiltshire Council Highways Report
- Decision on the NP proposition
- Engaging village regarding next stage

3.1 Construction of the Surgery

At the time of the last meeting the group were awaiting confirmation from WC that the surgery's construction was deliverable and would be a requirement of any land deal and not just making the site available for development, so no decisions could be made at the time regarding the next stage. Since then confirmation has been received from WC (via JT and the relevant officers) that the construction of the surgery will be deliverable and a condition of the land sale. It was emphasised that this is not something that could be dealt with by way of a planning condition.

The planned new surgery would initially be owned by WC and rented to the doctors; once WC has recouped their investment they will transfer the building to the parish council and community.

The most important factor is by building a new surgery, leasing it to the doctors safeguards it for the future. A new surgery will help attract new GPs as they will not have to financially buy into the practice as the building is being leased. Should a new surgery not be provided the existing surgery, which is not fit for purpose, is likely to close within 7 years.

3.2 The Pre School

PC informed the group that the potential new pre-school has not only the full support of the school but the Diocese is also in favour. There is currently a survey which is out for consultation asking for views from villagers. So far the majority is in favour.

3.3 Sporting facilities and improvements

Now that it has been confirmed by WC that it is not possible (utilising WC or NP policies) to seek direct funding towards improving off site sports facilities elsewhere in the village, it was suggested by JT that the CIL (community Infrastructure Levy) payments made by developers could instead help with this aspect. Once a NP is in place a community can get 25% instead of the 15% CIL

contribution from the development. This could amount to a reasonable sum of money – dependent on the amount of development that is promoted via the NP.

3.4. Viability Report

At the last full steering group meeting the viability assessment report on site 1A/B produced by Seymour Surveyors was discussed. Seymour produced a basic summary of its findings which was circulated. The whole report is not available for the Steering Group to review because WC has asked for it not to go into the public domain at this current time due to sensitive commercial information. However there has since been a smaller NP sub-committee meeting at which more details of its contents were set out.

The report concludes that the proposed development of the site by way of the erection of a new surgery of the size required by the GPs, the allocation of land for a preschool and for any future school expansion would be financially viable with the development of 45 new homes (assuming that 40% of those would be affordable houses for local people). The assessment showed that only this amount of houses on this site would deliver all which was required. It was suggested therefore that this should be the proposal that is put to the village - but only if the steering group are in agreement.

The cost analysis also showed that the scheme is on the margin of viability and the landowners are not set to make a vast profit however they are very keen to see a new surgery built and to leave a legacy for the village.

A member of the public questioned the cost of the build believing it to be very high not only financially but at the cost of 45 new homes; could it not be built for less with fewer houses? Asking if more options couldn't be further investigated. They also questioned if built would the surgery actually be viable?

JT stated expressed the view that in the near future money would soon start coming back to the rural communities and smaller practices to take the strain from "acute" hospitals. The bigger threat was doing nothing, as the village would lose the practice. JT explained Wiltshire Council would own the surgery and it will be their responsibility / risk for approximately the first 5 – 10 years. Ownership would then transfer to the Parish Council where a suitable community organisation (e.g. similar to SOSIC) would need to be set up to administer future arrangements. The community owning the surgery would protect the practice for the future.

Regarding the costs, MJ explained that both the surgery and the Steering Group have employed independent experts to give a figure regarding the cost of the build and both came up with the same figure. Also other avenues have been explored by both WC and the GPs and after more than 2 years of looking into different options we have been advised that this is the best one and indeed the only one that is going to deliver a new surgery with no financial burden to the village. MJ understood the point being made but felt that due to the lengthy time scale it has taken to even get to this point the group must try and progress the NP and make a decision on the way forwards. If agreed this proposal can be put to the village. It would then be up to the village to decide which direction to take the NP.

3.5. Wiltshire Highways Update

Wiltshire Highways had been asked to report back on the impact on Highways if the site was chosen for development. They have now given a list of requirements, which includes widening the road, providing footways etc. This could be achievable with the use of extra land to the side of the school which fortunately the Parish Council and/or WC own. There is a cost implication which will be more than in the Viability Assessment. However having no 3rd party involvement helps.

4. Way forward and future Actions

At last month's meeting it was proposed that MJ with the help of Frank Hatt compile an article and questionnaire regarding the "surgery" proposition for publication in The Cliffhanger. This is currently under preparation and further input has been made by HS and JK. If the steering group approve it will go into the January Cliffhanger asking for feedback. A public meeting would be held during the consultation period to give local residents an opportunity to discuss the issues in full.

The question was formally put to the group if they approve of the following proposal:

In return for the construction of a new GP surgery and the reservation of land for the possible future expansion of the Primary School and/or for the erection of a new building for the pre-school group, the Neighbourhood Plan will allocate land on the Sopworth Road site for the erection of up to 45 dwellings including affordable housing for local people.

A vote was taken and it was a unanimous 7 votes in favour of this proposal.

As discussed the article will go into the Cliffhanger in January, if anyone wishes to read the article before publication, please let MJ know asap. GH asked if it could be stressed that the NP has been worked on by local people.

5. Date of Next meeting

In the early New Year.

Meeting finished at 8.50pm. Notes taken by SW.