

Minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG)

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday 15th December 2020 at 7.30pm

Present: NPSG Members: Alison Alexander (Chair), Mike Loverock, Cheryl Loverock, Tom Lowry, Andrew Mogford, Chris Timpson, Ian Catherall and Bruce Thorogood

Attending: Duncan Smith (SHDC), Karen Smith (Clerk) and 1 Member of the Public

1) Following receipt of an email from Duncan (dated 27/11/20) indicating concerns with the 'Shropshire Policy', and certain aspects of the group's overall housing strategy, Duncan was invited along to clarify SHDC's position in regard to the NPSG's current approach. Duncan reiterated that if the group wish to deviate from JLP policy there would have to be strong justification. Other NP groups have gone against JLP policy and have gone through Examination, but only with substantive and robust evidenced-based arguments. Duncan explained his concerns around site sizes not achieving the required economies of scale to be able to produce affordable housing and also queried the demand for those sorts of dwellings. The group must look very carefully at what the JLP stipulates, and explain why Staverton Parish does not fit the mould and evidence the need for this sort of property. He confirmed that he was not saying 'no', but that it will be a 'no' if the justification presented does not convince.

- Alison explained the perspective of the NPSG. Sites to meet the housing need (20) can be found in Landscope, but in Staverton only 2 potential dwellings would qualify under the JLP, which is why the group adopted the approach it has.
- Duncan qualified that the exception site route has to be 60% affordable, 40% open market and economies of scale are not present in the allocations suggested.
- A lot of the sites are 'remote' from the boundary of the sustainable villages. The group understand why they are presenting these sites, but must prove that there are no alternative sites around Staverton that fit with the JLP, before moving out from the development boundary.
- Although Staverton & Landscope are approved in the JLP as sustainable villages, the NPSG disagree with this definition.
- Additionally, a lot of land in Staverton was Church Commissioners land and has restrictive covenants for the next 30 years. This would of course form part of the evidence base, as would all the NPSG's communications with landowners.
- Duncan clarified that the figure of 40 is indicative. The group can argue above or below, but in not meeting perceived housing need, the Parish would be vulnerable to developers coming in.
- The NP would have substantial weight for 2-3 years, beyond that other sites could come forward. Duncan would recommend starting a review of the NP after 2 years, if nothing is happening with certain sites.

- The group are to put in writing all the work done to formulate the evidence base and make the factual case for sites beyond the immediate boundary and for having fewer than 20 in Staverton.
- All remain in agreement that Landscope should not be overloaded to compensate for a lack of suitable sites in Staverton.

Duncan indicated he remains to be convinced on the Shropshire Policy but offered to consult with Shropshire to understand more fully how successful their model has been and if any resulting implications have been identified. He also offered his assistance to the NPSG to oversee the evidence gathered to prove their case. He will be available to meet people and see the issues in Staverton first hand in the New Year.

The process was outlined that when the final version of the NP is submitted, SHDC Planners will consult and make comments on the Plan, before it goes to an Independent Examiner. It is not impossible that SHDC could still reject it, but Duncan advised that very rarely happens.

Duncan left the meeting at 8.30pm.

Although concerned at SHDC's perceived stance, the group will push ahead.

- Alison to ring Lee to bring him up to speed.
- Lee to be invited to attend January NPSG meeting?
- Evidence to be pulled together of why we have got to where we are and where we want to take it:
 - analysis of original housing survey (Mike to collate and extract evidence);
 - what sites have been offered;
 - Housing Needs Survey – proper analysis report needs writing up;
 - The fact that not enough sites within or adjacent to boundary were put forward led to consideration of sites further remote from development boundary
 - Views of landowners need to be presented. (Alison to collate landowner comms/emails);
 - clear statement that land east of Staverton has not been put forward and why. This could be due to widespread restrictive covenants on former Church Commissioners land reducing the profitability of developing this land at the moment.
 - Need for examples of these covenant clauses. Bruce to provide standard clause re older ones in perpetuity and Tom a generic example of the newer one which is subject to sliding scale.
 - Suitable land will come up in the fullness of time but now is not the time for development on this land. Waiting until the covenants are off may allow the option to reduce the overall numbers at present?

All of this evidence to be pulled together by group members via email.

- The group will ask Lee to formulate a draft paper laying out the evidence-based arguments in a professional case – a cost estimate for scope of work to be sought (Alison); consider need to re-advise Locality Grant (Chris).
- Bruce suggested that Peter Sandover then has an overview of that paper, as he specialises in getting NP's through awkward stages.
- Tom to put Duncan in touch with Shropshire contact.

2) Date and form of next meeting – Tuesday 12th January at 7.30pm. This will again be a virtual meeting, open to all.

Meeting closed 9.00pm

Karen Smith, Clerk