

# **Minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG)**

## **Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 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:** Lee Bray (NP Consultant), Karen Smith (Clerk) and 2 Members of the Public

### **1) Parishioners Time**

A member of the public asked why no sites to the east of Staverton have been forward in the Plan. It was clarified that this is likely due to existing covenants put on the land by the Church Commissioners.

### **2) No apologies were received.**

### **3) The minutes from the last meeting on 15/12/20 were approved.**

### **4) Declaration of Interests and Dispensations relating to particular Sites**

- Alison Alexander (Chair) declared a financial interest in Site 8.
- Tom Lowry declared a personal, non pecuniary, interest in Site 21.
- Ian Catherall declared a financial interest in Site 4.
- Bruce Thorogood declared a personal interest in Site 13, being his next neighbour; also in Site 8, being across the road (non visual); and also in Site 10, being across the valley (visual).
- Chris Timpson declared a personal interest in site 8, being next door and visual.

### **5) Finance**

Decisions on what work the NPSG require Lee to do next will determine what the remainder of the current Locality Grant will cover.

### **6) Discussion with Lee Bray**

Lee talked the group through some basic policy principles (for full details of which refer to Lee's paper), but in essence, it is very unusual to allocate very small sites or single dwelling plots; a Plan can express support for 'an exception site', but cannot allocate an exception site.

Having reviewed the site choices made by the NPSG, Lee then set out his conclusions and recommendations for how to proceed – to enable the Plan to deliver the requirements of the JLP, whilst also responding to local needs and concerns.

With Staverton he agreed there is scope to argue that Staverton has no one focal point, and so there is a distinction from other South Hams parishes in terms of settlement pattern. However, Duncan Smith (SHDC) still maintains Staverton is not distinct.

## Staverton:

**Site 7** – JLP policy DEV8 means no affordable homes can be REQUIRED. Lee recommends deleting site altogether, mindful of history of planning refusals and access difficulties.

**Site 8** – Due to Church Commissioners Covenant, Lee would recommend not including in current Plan. **NPSG explained site 8 not free of Covenant until 2034 - 30% of the uplift in the value of the land is a disincentive.**

**Site 13** – the landowner may be happy for affordable but JLP policy DEV8 means Plan could not secure that. Lee's recommendation was to allocate 11 (to allow affordable) or delete site. **NPSG explained that the landowner only wants 4, anything higher than that is a non-starter.**

**Site 15** – the NPSG did not allocate this site, but Lee favours it. His view is it would accommodate more than 11 dwellings if the development includes flats and then 30% affordable could be secured. **NPSG view:** Staverton Bridge is almost a separate settlement. Site 15 is a long way out of the 'village centre', but is close to the Playing Fields and does have pedestrian access along the riverside to the Church. Commercial planning is extant and commercial premises are important to the Plan. Is affordability really achievable on this site? It is an expensive site to develop. More units would be required to achieve affordability given riverside location, however lots of constraints with this site, parking provision problematic. Strong reservations expressed over development of site 15 giving rise to 2<sup>nd</sup> homes versus meeting local housing need.

## Landscape:

**Site 1** – most sustainable site at Woolston Green, but if Beara approved for 14, it might be better to hold this site back. **NPSG view:** Not against a larger development on Site 1, but mindful of Beara and risk of over-development. Key to know if Beara proceeding.

**Site 3** – can hope for Affordable, but cannot require it. Lee would delete site. **NPSG view: Memory X is the 3<sup>rd</sup> major settlement in the Parish and very suitable for expansion; on the main road so good communications.** Lee agreed Memory X is a strong hamlet, but does not fall into category of 'sustainable village'. Tom queried 'Tier 4 Settlement under JLP policy TTV1'.

**Site 29** – Lee against for same reasons as Site 3. NPSG believe both Sites 3 & 29 meet affordable housing requirements of TTV27. Lee insistent should not be allocated in Plan, as will fail under JLP policy. NPSG very sad not to include Site 29 and will consider supporting statement of both Sites 3 & 29 as exception sites, but with real concerns whether this will count.

**Site 4** – statement that an exception site for a single affordable dwelling would be supported.

**Site 26** – one dwelling acceptable, but could be no affordable requirement.

**Site 28** – run with this site for now. If planning were to fail, revert to Site 1. Possibility of extending this site within the Plan? Say 5 more in a 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase?

In summary, Lee favours Sites 15 & 13 for Staverton and Sites 28 & 26 for Landscape; supportive statements regarding certain additional sites being advanced as exception sites would mean the indicative figure of 40 could be met. Fundamentally, the NPSG have confined the Plan to sites put forward and to what landowners want to develop. It was Lee's opinion that if the NPSG propose something greater than a landowner originally envisaged, they may change their mind.

Alison thanked Lee for his input which the NPSG now need to digest and use to revisit the Plan.

Disillusionment and strong disappointment was expressed, particularly around the issues in Staverton. The option to take the line that sites put forward are not suitable was mooted, with a view to identifying sites for development in Staverton into the longer term when covenants are lifted.

If 20 homes are not delivered in Staverton, Duncan had previously indicated that this would not leave Landscope vulnerable to having 40. Lee however indicated that everything should be done to try and hit 20 in each and pressed the group on how committed they are to providing affordable housing versus delivering 40 homes? If the group fail to bring the Plan forward, SHDC will choose.

From the NPSG's perspective, Parishioners want the rural nature of our Parish to be sustained and the NPSG have a wealth of evidence that the majority of parishioners support and want the approach that the NPSG have taken. Decision on the way forward is down to the NPSG.

- It was decided to pose some specific questions to Duncan Smith:
  1. Can the Plan allocate small sites with a high affordable housing requirement?
  2. Would SHDC regard Site 15 to be part of Staverton Village?
  3. Do SHDC regard Memory X as a hamlet (Tier 4) or a functional part of Woolston Green?
- Lee will take communication forward with Duncan and report back.
- Lee will also update his paper and provide a tabulation showing possible sites and how they might be brought forward.

## **7) Allotting of collection of evidence**

Deferred.

## **8) Date and form of next meeting – Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm.** This will again be a virtual meeting, open to all.

Meeting closed 9.20pm

Karen Smith, Clerk