



First Steering Group meeting held on 2nd May 2018 at 7pm in the Palairet Hall.

NPSG 01. Introductions

George Hitchins (GH) welcomed everyone attending the meeting and introduced Jo Milling, Planning Policy Officer at MDC.

NPSG 02.

Alice Tollworthy(AT) was elected as Chair for this evening's meeting having been proposed by GH and seconded by Ian Hasell (IH)

The following people who have volunteered to join the Steering Group were asked by AT to introduce themselves.

AliceTollworthy, George Hitchins, Deborah Allen, Andy Linegar, Gill Morgan, Rupert Foster ,Barbi Lund, Ian Hasell, Bob Chapman, Gordon Currie, Ian O'Brien, Graham Tickell, Brenda Graham, Liz Mills, Ian Hasell.

15 other residents of the parish were present.

NPSG 03 Scope of a Neighbourhood Plan

Jo Milling (JM) said she would outline the scope and welcomed questions.

It is a big undertaking to produce a NP but worthwhile. It is like a miniature Local Plan looking at land use base; once made i.e. adopted, it has to be one of the first points of reference when a planning application comes in.

The NP has to be evidenced based including statistics from MDC, survey work, community views and opinions. There has to be evidence to back up every point.

It has to be deliverable.

It has to be land use based; it constrains what you can put in, land for houses, employment, green spaces, the way traffic moves through the village.

Other aspirations can be included in passing eg a village hall.

Although the text can be freer, policies have to be written to be flexible enough but

not so they have no real meaning. The policy team at Mendip can help.

NPSG04 Process

Issues and Options have to be determined. A loose opening of the discussion by getting views, talking to people eg. a village day or event or informally is essential.

The inspector will want to see that as many people as possible have participated (at least 50%) in various ways such as answering a questionnaire, at informal meetings so they can express their views. This will contribute to the evidence base.

Regulation 14 Consultation. The draft has to be formally consulted with the parish eg. on social media, doorstep meetings, circulating the document. The redrafted plan is then sent to Mendip who will do a Regulation 16 consultation to ensure village support. The next step is it goes to the inspector to ensure it meets necessary conditions and thence to a referendum. Community involvement is absolutely critical for the inspector to see.

The referendum would be conducted formally as eg. an election to elect district councillors.

JM was asked by GH about the pressure MDC is under on housing supply. She said there were significant challenges. Potential national changes to the NPPF could increase housing supply figures in Mendip by up to 40% which would be a great challenge to meet. The benefit of having a NP in place is we would only have to demonstrate a 3 year supply for the 2 years after the Plan was made (adopted) provided we allocated sites in NSP.

IH commented that we are already a victim because in 2014 MDC couldn't demonstrate a 5 year supply and were caught out by a change in government policy as shown in Evercreech. We have more than exceeded the requirement in NSP. He asked how many NPs have been made in Mendip: what were the maximum and minimum times taken and how many have failed.

JM said so far only Rode which took 5 years but went smoothly through the inspection process; and Frome which took longer as they had so many more issues and the scope was extensive.

AT asked if the Rode Plan had been used in planning applications. JM confirmed it had. She reiterated the importance of having a 3 year land supply and not losing the 5 year allocation. NSP has NO minimum allocation.

Gill Morgan asked about Farleigh Hungerford and Hassage being in the green belt. JM said that matters such as connectivity, green spaces, transport, could be considered but housing was not so relevant as there is green belt policy.

Liz Mills asked what practical support can we expect from MDC. JM said they could help with supplying evidence such as maps and with checking policies and advice on process.

On the use of consultants, JM felt they can be helpful but that a locally spun plan looked better than a very slick document.

Robin Campbell asked if sites with lapsed planning permission help in allocating sites. JM said that any identified sites have to be deliverable.

AT thanked JM for attending and for her comments.

JM left the meeting.

NPSG 05 Vision

A document showing a draft vision statement and objectives was displayed and comments invited from Steering Group and all attendees.

Should we have transport policies?

Should employment be added? May be a working group ? There seems to already be organic growth of businesses along Farleigh Road.

We have to focus on land use.

Growth needs to be commensurate with more green spaces being available.

Well designed environmental policies will be necessary to respond to climate change.

Parking is a problem now for residents exacerbated by through traffic. We need to be able to park.

What would be the timeline of the NP? 2029 and should set review dates.
Village amenities eg. School and shop and the future.
There has to be commensurate social and community infrastructure.

Agreed that the draft objectives should be reviewed following this meeting. They will need to be distilled and developed.
There needs to be a meeting structure for the Steering Group and to review this evening's comments.

NPSG 06 Working Groups

There was discussion about consulting with the community on the draft objectives and any amendments.
One proposal was to have a 'stall' at the Cricket Weekend 30 June/ 1 July.

AT proposed it would be helpful to have a first attempt at drawing up a list of what working groups might be appropriate and ideally to start with people who have some relevant expertise.
The following were suggested

- Planning policies, development, housing.
- Village Character, conservation, green spaces
- Environment, ecology sustainability
- Community amenities, facilities, education, churches, employment,
- transport, traffic.

AT suggested a structure has to be agreed and to identify someone to lead each working group.

Issues have to be identified by looking at current evidence and determining how to collect further evidence.

Terms of reference for working groups and to set boundaries for each group. Written terms of reference absolutely needed. Bob Chapman said this has either to be done by the Steering Group, or by the working groups themselves or with help from a consultant.

Liz Mills stressed the importance of determining methodology.

AT suggested we may need to look for professional guidance on terms of reference and how to proceed.

Robin Campbell asked how the Parish Council would be involved. It has produced terms of reference for the Steering Group which would report on progress to each meeting monthly meeting of the PC. The PC hold funds from the grant for work in producing the NP.

There was discussion about the tight timescale.

There was a consensus that using the services of a planning professional would be beneficial. The PC was seeking quotations from several consultants with experience of NPs and had sought discussions with them.

Rode had recommended Liz Beth, the consultant they used, from LB Consultancy. She has visited NSP.

Place Studio had been recommended by the Sustainability Group.

Planning Street was also being considered.

There was some discussion about how consultants could help the SG and working groups .

It was stressed that the appointment of a consultant will be made in due course, and as soon as possible, by the PC.

Ian Hasell commented that Holt in Wiltshire recently had their NP adopted and he was willing to contact them to see if we could learn from their experience and processes.

AT said that if everyone was in agreement we should recommend to the PC that a planning consultant be appointed. The preferred candidate was Liz Beth.

Some further points about working groups were raised.

Sustainability should not have a narrow brief.

Deborah Allen suggested that it should be a general principle reflected in each group.

There was a feeling it was too early to ask for volunteers to be in charge of working groups.

NSPG 07 VCA

A second meeting of the Steering Group was scheduled for 12th May.

Rather than focus on the Village Character Assessment it was suggested by AT that the SG needed to be logically guided through the next steps as identified in this evening's meeting.

It was pointed out that we can't invite a consultant to that meeting as no one has yet been appointed.

Barbi Lund added that there are also future opportunities to get free advice and help from other sources and consultants as shown in the Low Carbon Neighbourhood Planning document.

There is further funding from the PC to be allocated to the SG as required and agreed.

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NPSG 08 Open Forum

There needs to be a Chairman of the Steering Group.

After some discussion, Ian Hasell agreed to consider taking on this role.

AT thanked everyone for attending and for their very helpful contributions.

The SG would be updated by email on the time, venue and agenda of next meeting.