

Semington Neighbourhood Planning

Steering Group Meeting 19 Tuesday May 9th 2023

1930 to 2130 Village Hall Social Club and on-line



AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and apologies
- 2 Recording any declarations of interest in relation to the agenda
- 3 Approving the minutes of meeting 18 on April 5th – Paper 19.1 (pages 2 to 3)
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes and update on activities
- 5 Feedback from the April Consultation – Paper 19.2 (pages 4 to 8)
- 6 Deciding whether to allocate land for housing, and if so how to engage landowner(s) – Paper 19.3 (sent with agenda)
- 7 Agreeing final Local Green Space list and signing off report ready for Regulation 14 Consultation (to follow)
- 8 Outlining process and actions to prepare for Regulation 14 consultation
- 9 Updating on Wiltshire Council planning decisions and on NPPF revisions
- 10 Identifying business for the June meeting on June 6th

18.1

Those steering group members present, Sheralyn Milburn SM (from #5), Bill Scott BS, Peter Smith (Chair), Hugh Turnbull HT, Ian Williamson IW and Katie Lea (Place Studios). Apologies were received from Vicky Bodman. Jacqui Hayley JH attended the meeting to help prepare for the public consultation on April 22nd.

18.2

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

18.3/4

The minutes of steering group meeting 17 on March 14th were approved. It was decided to add a footnote to the local business survey report noting the pub had temporarily closed. **Action HT / KL – completed**

PS reported on the useful meeting that he, KL and BS had had with the joint Melksham neighbourhood planning team. Subsequent to this a report had been received from the Clerk to MWPC noting that an addendum had been added to their documentation detailing what they term a ‘green wedge’ designed to avoid coalescence of settlements. This obviously fits with our interest as well.

KL reported a conversation with our landscape consultant, Fiona Sharman, which confirmed that our best strategy to avoid coalescence would be to continue to emphasise the *high landscape sensitivity* of the land adjacent to the Kennet & Avon canal. Where necessary, this will point be reinforced within our paperwork.

Action KL – on going

18.5

The final comments from landowners about green space provision in the parish were discussed, and each site was considered in relation to how well it met criteria related to: beauty, tranquility, recreation, history and wildlife. It was agreed to include five spaces in the forthcoming informal public consultation:

Land	Owner	Location	Notes
1	Wiltshire Council	High Street	Included , include even though the land is an adopted highway and thus normally excluded as green space
2	Swaine	Wessex Close	Included although opposed by the landowners who do support the use of the land for young people’s play
3	Westerleigh plc	Crematorium	The western part of the land is included with support from the landowner; a line will need to be drawn on the map to define the area prior to an anticipated transfer of ownership to the Parish Council
4	Wiltshire Council	Ragged Smock	Included , include even though the land is an adopted highway and thus normally excluded as green space
5a	Wiltshire Council	High Street	Excluded – not considered to meet criteria
5b	Wiltshire Council	Little Marsh	Excluded – not considered to meet criteria
6	Masters	Pound Lane	Excluded – landowner objections / not considered to meet criteria
7	Parochial Church Council	Pound Lane (Church Field)	Excluded – landowner objections / not considered to meet criteria
8	Giles	Littleton	Included with support with from the landowner (with one proviso)
9	Masters	High Street	Excluded – not considered to meet criteria
10	Willis	High Street	Excluded – landowner objections / not considered to meet criteria

Any landowner who has not yet been contacted will now be updated on outcomes. **Action BS – completed**

18.6

This point was dealt with in 18.3/4.

18.7

The format for the consultation in the village hall will be similar to the first event in 2022 with a clockwise circulation of people past a series of boards. Arrows will be used to guide movement. Place Studios will provide logistical materials and support on the day and both KL and VT will attend. SM is responsible for flowers and refreshments, and JH will welcome people into the hall. Steering group members will circulate around the boards engaging visitors in conversation about the issues, particularly reminding people about the need to provide post-it responses to key questions. Setting up will begin at 0945.

KL’s redraft of the materials (timeline, display boards and other visuals) for the April 22nd consultation were discussed and agreed as the basis for the consultation. These will now be produced in a final form. **Action KL – completed**

It was agreed that everyone should think of the kind of key questions that we are likely to be asked on the 22nd and forward these to KL before April 16th. **Action All**. A set of responses for all to use during the consultation will then be created. **Action KL – completed**

Two copies of the Aecom report will be available on the day with the newly agreed Preface added to it. **Action BS – completed**

BS will follow up with VB about progress in setting up a power point / Loom Video presentation that can be viewed and responded to on-line. **Action BS – completed**

It was agreed to allow 2 weeks from the consultation for responses to be made, with a decision about allocation being made at the May SG meeting so that the draft plan can be submitted to Wiltshire Council for SEA monitoring.

18.8

The map of non-designated heritage assets in the parish was agreed. This will now be added to the heritage documentation. **Action KL – on going**

BS agreed to circulate a paper outlining a key WWII asset along Pound Lane. **Action BS – completed**

18.9

SG meeting dates were agreed for the next 3 months: Tues May 9th Tues June 6th Tues July 11th
These will now be booked. **Action BS – completed**

18.10

The next meeting is on Tuesday May 9th at 1930. The business will include:

- Considering feedback from the April 22nd consultation and from landowners
- Agreeing a strategy for Reg 14 submission
- Updating on Wiltshire Council planning decisions
- Updating on NPPF revisions

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Drafted April 6th 2023

1 Summary

Attendance this time was a little down on previous consultations, despite wide publicity for the event in the parish magazine and on the village Facebook page. But 55 people came to express their views on housing, landscape and green spaces, and their level of engagement was reflected in much lively discussion and by the 70 post-it notes that they left for us to consider.

The results were pleasingly clear-cut, with unanimous support for the Plan to include policies to protect sensitive landscapes and to designate green spaces. Perhaps more surprising was the strong support for allocating a site for housing to enable the Plan to give greater protection from speculative development. Of the four sites identified, there was a clear preference for site 1 at the Turnpike and strong rejection of site 2, north of Pound Lane. The response to the other two sites was more varied but largely negative.

The results in detail from the tick boxes on the exhibition boards were:

2 Ticks & Crosses

LANDSCAPE

Q) Do you think the Neighbourhood Plan should include a policy to protect sensitive landscape areas?

YES 43

MAYBE 0

NO 0

GREEN SPACES

Q) Do you think the Neighbourhood Plan should include a policy to designate some Green Spaces that meet the national criteria for designation?

YES 42

MAYBE 0

NO 0

HOUSING

Q) Given the reasons set out for allocation, do you think the Neighbourhood Plan should consider allocating a site for housing?

YES 27

MAYBE 8

NO 0

Q) If you said yes or maybe to allocating a site for housing, what do you think of the suitability of these sites? Please add any conditions that would be necessary for you to support that site (or part of it)? Should we allocate?

SITE 1

YES 26

MAYBE 9

NO 1

Conditions: "Fewer houses, and access only from Turnpike, not through village via St George's School." "Also access from Turnpike"

SITE 2

YES 0

MAYBE 2

NO 29

SITE 3

YES 3

MAYBE 8

NO 20

Conditions: "Orchard needs to be accessible to all!" "Only if lower density"

SITE 4

YES 10

MAYBE 4

NO 24

Conditions: "Would village shop be a co-operative with local business/farms?"

3 Comments From Post-It Notes

The 70 post-it notes cover a range of issues. Several call for any additional housing to focus on smaller, affordable and/or social houses for local young people who wish to stay where they grew up and older villagers who want to downsize. Others are sceptical about current requirements for affordable housing and call for developers to be compelled to provide truly affordable homes and make a greater contribution to local amenities or infrastructure.

Several stress the importance of protecting Semington from encroachment from neighbouring towns. Others want to maintain a green buffer along the canal. There is some disappointment that the Plan is not able to designate more green spaces. The view on landscape and environment is perhaps best summed up by this Semington resident:

“I love living in a village surrounded by beautiful green spaces that support much wildlife and ensure future of biodiversity. I vote to keep it all.”

4 Written Comments

LANDSCAPE

“I love living in a village surrounded by beautiful green spaces that support much wildlife and ensure future of biodiversity. I vote to keep it all.”

“There is land in Little Marsh that has lots of wildlife – deer, bats, wild rabbits, hedgehogs – and this is low sensitivity. Why?”

“I would like the Semington Brook and its catchment to be mentioned alongside the K+A Canal.”

“Land that continues along St Georges Road cycle path has much nature, bats, etc – but is low sensitivity?”

“Open character of Kennet and Avon Canal and associated views, trees, hedges. Very important.”

“I would like the plan to look at the two fields along Church Street – opposite 13 and 14 and next to 26.”

“Flood plain building should not be considered and should be stopped at first submission.”

GREEN SPACES

“Areas adjoining canal and in sight of canal should not be considered for planning. Takes away from recreational amenity.”

“Shame we couldn’t designate more.”

“I would like to designate MORE green spaces.”

“ALL of these green spaces should be protected.”

“Green space on Church Street, opposite 13 and 14 and next to 26, is not shown as green space.”

“Green space at St Georges Place is not shown as green space.”

“It would be great to do something with the playing field beside Wessex Close play area – this is protected space.”

“Can we encourage would-be builders to create more. Also include/expand biodiversity to actively encourage re-naturing.”

“Please keep all these green spaces and access to them, including the ability for people who have limited mobility to use them too – e.g. wheelchair users, those who can only walk short distances. Do we need benches in those places for people to rest on?”

HOUSING

“If we can allocate to control the development then that is probably a good thing.”

“Only if it protects against speculative development.”

“Range of houses for allowing local first time buyers being able to live where they grew up. Village facilities like a shop, pub and new social club would be beneficial. Public use green spaces.”

“Future housing must ensure a barrier between Semington and the eastern expansion of Trowbridge.”

“We must make sure that any commitment or promises by developers are enforceable and kept, e.g. affordable houses allocated to people with village connections.”

“We need affordable and/or family housing in the village to ensure new generational living.”

“The number of sites on the map is concerning. It needs to be controlled and facilities improved.”

“Give us some say in where we’d prefer new development which we would support.”

“We should consider allocating land, but on conditions that housing companies fund development of infrastructure. 1) refurb village hall. 2) all weather sports pitch with floodlights. 3) floodlight tennis courts. 4) repairs to church.”

“Affordable houses is a term used in many cases to gain planning. In reality it is not delivered!! What should be considered is the definition of affordable from the onset, and value.”

“Mixed generation, community led housing may be a good idea for the village.

“Affordable housing – social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, discount market sale – for people with LOCAL connections would be beneficial.”

“Local amenities must not be compromised, e.g. canal. There must be affordable housing as part of any planning.”

“We are not against new affordable housing in the area – to include village shop. However, not on green spaces and enhancing the rural village status.”

“Housing for families and people who work locally. Ensure the village is not absorbed with current encroachment from Melksham and Trowbridge.”

“May be controversial. While affordable and locals’ houses are important, we should also consider the opportunity for high cost houses to bring some more money into the village to help businesses (pub) survive.”

“Affordable housing and encouraging more ‘community’ housing would be good, i.e. inter-generational and mixed housing development.”

“If development is to take place, it must be for properties that the village needs. Properly affordable starter homes and retirement properties. Not more 5-bed mansions.”

SITE 1

“40 is a lot of new houses. More specific benefit for the village should be offered. Beware the shop – nice idea but it needs to be economically viable.”

“Existing access, least disruption.””

“Yes, but access from Turnpike, not St Georges Road.”

“Yes to site, but access only from the Turnpike and definitely not via village and St Georges Road. We should ask for perhaps a footpath through the site.”

“Sadly I think a shop is a noble idea that needs an inordinate amount of work to maintain and keep viable.”

SITE 2

“This site has been refused many times for good reasons, proximity to canal + agricultural use + big step towards opening up more development.”

“This has been turned down for good reason twice – there is no room on the road to increase traffic, especially with the school.”

“Def not number 2. Worry this is close to canal, but also next door site will use as excuse to expand.”

"I thought site 2 had been blocked twice."

"No to building up to the canal. 'Save' and leave the wildlife."

"Too close to canal and heritage assets."

"No because it will harm the green space integrity for wildlife well-being."

"Less dense development. Traffic on the A361 would need restriction of speed for safety." (*may have been intended for site 4*)

SITE 3

"Fewer houses. If this is very low density, sensitive to local architecture, and gave new green space/nature friendly, it could work."

"Not an appropriate site for so many houses. ? Bungalows. ? How to fit a community orchard too, with so many houses."

"Green areas need to be protected for all."

"Too many houses for this site if to include orchard too! What about a village green, pond and 6-10 retirement bungalows?"

"The two WW2 bunkers must be protected from development."

"Only if orchard and woodland are accessible to villagers."

"Too large an area. Less houses."

"Not appropriate. Major access issues."

SITE 4

"Village becoming too big. Keep as a village."

"Too many houses. Build on the already unused salt store – not one of our green spaces."

"Would ruin views of Roundway hill and "openness" of High Street."

"Will destroy the view of Roundway Down."

"This is a large green space that has become a nature friendly space due to its neglect. We should preserve this for as long as possible."

"It could be viable in 25 years time. Not now."

ANY FINAL COMMENTS?

"Semington must preserve its identity from being absorbed into external development, especially from the east (Trowbridge, Hilperton), by establishing development barriers."

"Possible increase in housing pressure due to (known) second home owners in the village."

"With the amount of houses being built in neighbouring towns, do we really need more housing here?"

"The rural nature of the canal must be preserved."

"Can we please push for 'extras' for the village from developers planning to use our designated sites."

"Semington has a rich WW2 heritage which must be protected from development."

"Please build on our brown/unused sites such as old council salt store. Don't use our green spaces. Affordable only."

"Room for both 4/5 bed and starter homes. The more expensive houses help pay for the affordable ones. Good for developments to have a mix of properties and therefore residents."

“Not all development is bad, but we must only build additional required housing. Properly affordable starter homes and retirement properties. No more 4/5 beds. Sensible building and layout, with no loss to hedgerows and trees. Minimum density of properties on a site. Let’s protect and enhance to move forward.”