

Semington Neighbourhood Planning

Steering Group Meeting 20 Tuesday June 6th 2023

1930 to 2130 Village Hall Social Club and on-line



Open AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and apologies
- 2 Recording any declarations of interest in relation to the agenda
- 3 Approving the minutes of meeting 19 on May 9th – Paper 20.1
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes and Chair's update
- 5 Feedback from the Parish Council meeting on May 17th
- 6 Closed Agendum item
- 7 Closed Agendum item
- 8 Closed Agendum item
- 9 Discussing the Regulation 14 process and actions
- 10 Considering a draft developer engagement protocol – Paper 20.10
- 11 Introducing ['Building for a Healthier Life'](#)
- 12 Noting a comment from a parishioner on the climate change survey and its reporting – Paper 20.12 (agenda pages 5 and 6)
- 13 Deciding whether to sign off the local business and climate change reports
- 14 Noting relevant Wiltshire Council planning decisions, progress with the Local Plan, and NPPF updates
- 15 Identifying business for meeting 21 on July 6th

19.1

Those steering group members present, Sheralyn Milburn SM, Bill Scott BS, Peter Smith (Chair), Hugh Turnbull HT, Ian Williamson IW and Katie Lea (Place Studios). Apologies were received from Vicky Bodman.

19.2

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

19.3/4

The minutes of steering group meeting 18 on April 5th were approved.

19.5

Feedback from the April 22nd consultation was discussed along with comments from landowners. It was considered that the event had been well organized and professionally presented by Place Studios and that there had been good promotion of it within the parish through social media, the website, the parish magazine and by word of mouth. Hospitality within the event and hall's attractiveness (thanks to SM) were commented on. Of particular note was the extended time that people took to engage with the displays and discuss what was presented. HT was thanked for his summary of the points made by villagers on April 22nd.

Only one post-event comment from villagers was received by the deadline. Comments will be added to the consultation record. **Action HT – completed**

It was noted that there was broad consistency to the preferences expressed. This might be summarized:

- Landscape: Approval for the Neighbourhood Plan to include a policy to protect sensitive landscape areas (100% of responses). In comments, the importance of the Brook and the Kennet & Avon canal was stressed. There was some questioning as to whether particular parts of the parish had not been included, but those areas were usually of value for reasons other than landscape.
- Green Space: Approval for Neighbourhood Plan to include a policy to designate those Green Spaces that meet the national criteria for designation (98% of responses). It was agreed that there was scope for a number of projects arising from these designations, for example accessibility and the provision of benches.

In comments, some noted that it was a pity that more land was not included; one area in particular in St George's Place was mentioned. The meeting reviewed this site and came to the view that this did not meet any of the criteria for inclusion. It was agreed to look into the ownership of this land.

Action SM – to be reported

- Housing: Approval for the allocation of a site for housing within the plan given the advantages that this confers in relation to working with a plan-led approach to development (78% yes – 22% maybe – 0% no)

Preferences for the sites were:

- Site 1 (73% yes – 24% maybe – 3% no)
- Site 2 (0% yes – 6% maybe – 94% no)
- site 3 (13% yes – 25% maybe – 63% no)
- Site 4 (28% yes – 10% maybe – 62% no)

KL noted that no comment either from villagers or landowners questioned the probity, integrity or legitimacy of any of the information presented. This corroborated the steering group's own view that its strategy – a transparent process carried out by independent consultants and shared with the community with both pros and cons to development presented, and which had resulted in a clear steer – had been vindicated.

It was agreed to write to landowners to thank them for their responses so far, confirm progress made and next steps including preparation for Regulation 14 consultation, and to ask them to confirm that the site is still available and if there are any changes in information submitted to the SG about the site to date. **Action KL (drafting) BS (sending) – completed.**

In terms of next responsible actions, the next step is for the Parish Council to confirm whether or not to designate land for housing, and then for preparations to be made for Regulation 14 consultation. It was agreed that the steering group would be responsible for all the Regulation preparations.

19.6

Given the clear feedback from the village, it was agreed to recommend to the Parish Council as the Qualifying Body for the Neighbourhood Plan:

- That the Parish Council note and validate the main evidence bases (Sites and Landscape) and community consultation process as robust and sound.
- That the Neighbourhood Plan should propose designation of local green space in accordance with evidence and feedback.
- That the Neighbourhood Plan should propose to allocate land for housing led development informed by and accordance with evidence and feedback from the community to date.
- That the Parish Council request that the steering group progress the preparation of draft housing allocation and green space designations to be included in a Reg 14 draft Neighbourhood Plan and that the draft be brought back to Parish Council for its validation prior to formal public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- That the Parish Council pass any further comments back to the steering group.

Action PS at the May PC meeting – **completed.**

The June steering group meeting will consider the Parish Council's recommendation alongside any further landowner comment, and decide how to take the plan forward. NB, this part of the meeting will be closed to the public and decisions not recorded in the publicly-available minutes.

19.7

The latest draft of the Local Green Space report was discussed and agreed as definitive.

19.8

KL outlined the process and actions now needed to prepare for Regulation 14 consultation. This is the first formal consultation with the community. Documentation will be drawn up by the steering group using Place Studios' tool kit and templates. **Action KL – in process.**

Prior to Regulation 14, documentation has to be submitted to Wiltshire Council in relation to the environmental impacts that the plan might have (on biodiversity, SSSIs, Green Belt, heritage, highways, etc) – Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening. This involves the submission of draft policies. **Action KL,** who will also talk to David Way about the process and likely timescale – **completed**

It was agreed to update the consultation statement and timeline. **Action BS – completed**

19.9

There were no relevant recent Wiltshire Council's planning decisions although a recent PINS decision in Melksham Without had shown the value of having a neighbourhood plan. The timetable for the confirmation of revisions to the NPPF keeps slipping amid continuing political dispute.

Wiltshire Council's Local Plan draft is likely to be ready for consultation in the late Summer / early Autumn.

KL noted that *Locality* had still not confirmed that finance would be available for neighbourhood planning in 2023/24. It was agreed to write to Michelle Donelan MP to express our strongly-felt concern about this.

Action PS – to be reported.

19.10

The next meeting is on Tuesday June 6th at 1930. The business will include:

- Parish Council and landowner feedback
- Site allocation decisions
- Agreeing paperwork and policies for the Regulation 14 submission
- Signing off the local business and climate change reports
- Wiltshire Council planning decisions, the Local Plan and NPPF revisions

Message

Will you accept the results of an alternative climate survey as evidence for the NP?

I am shocked at the so called climate change 'survey'. This is clearly an invalid and biased survey. Use of words like 'impressive' in the reporting are inappropriate given the number of respondents. Can you show us the methodology that was used?

Surveys of this type are being used in dishonest ways to suggest there is widespread support for a (sic) measures, when they suggest no such thing.

I'm thinking many of the 3 per cent were like me - people who actually know the science and the economics – did you include the comments from such people or was it only those for a climate community response?

Are you seriously suggesting that this represents the views of the people of this village?

Follow-up note to the Chair

Thank you, Peter.

I'm not sure which survey was in September.

Firstly, I don't in all honesty expect, the already stretched and well intentioned PC to spend much time on what was largely an expression of my frustration at a bigger problem.

Here are my main points summarised:

(1) The PC and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group should not be engaged in activism and bias by promoting any particular view. Note the following indicative example from the promotional literature for the survey.

'What a great time to be launching a Climate Change Survey, when we've all been sweltering in record temperatures and the experts warn that extreme heat will become a regular occurrence. So now that we have your attention, please help us to plan a greener Semington.'

(2) I understand that getting public engagement with surveys is difficult, but the results should be reported in an intellectually honest way, not extrapolating from what can be meaningfully said. Again, they should not be written as an activist promotional piece. Words/phrases like 'impressive' and 'the response was overwhelming.' have no place in reporting survey results, whichever direction they go in. This is unambiguously indicative of bias, demonstrating that the survey was conducted with an activist mindset rather than an unbiased public consultation.

Hopefully I don't need to go over the report 'sentence by the sentence' for any reasonable and intellectually honest person to see the problem.

(3) In conclusion, my comment was largely an expression of my frustration at a bigger problem with our institutions - intellectual dishonesty has become the norm. I do care about climate change - I have written two dissertations on the subject - one on mitigation, the other an analysis of extreme events in the South West of England! So hopefully you can see - and please forgive my facetiousness, it illustrates a serious point - why I am a little 'triggered' by the report that people of Semington are walking around in fear of heatwaves. A comprehensive survey of dog walkers passing my garden every day would indicate differently (joke) - although that could possibly constitute a more representative sample!

In all seriousness-thank you for your time and dedication to Semington Village. I just ask for a return to measured, appropriate language and approaches. The climate change survey falls woefully short of that standard in my opinion!