

Semington Neighbourhood Planning

Steering Group Meeting 21 Tuesday July 11th 2023

1930 to 2130 Village Hall and on-line



AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and apologies
- 2 Recording any declarations of interest in relation to the agenda
- 3 Approving the minutes of open agenda meeting 20 on June 6th – Paper 21.1 (pages 2 to 4)
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes and Chair's update to include:
 - Feedback from the Parish Council meeting on June 14th
 - Updated feedback from landowners
 - Updating of the pre-application application protocol – Paper 21.2 (pages 5 to 7)
 - Updating Locality funding arrangements
- 5 Agreeing draft paperwork and policies for the Regulation 14 submission – Paper 21.3 (separately circulated)
- 6 Considering the adapted Place Studios toolkit Paper 21.4 (separately circulated)
- 7 Approving the Regulation 14 feedback form – Paper 21.5a and text for the web – Paper 21.5b (both separately circulated)
- 8 Preparing for the village fete; approving flier text – Papers 21.6 & 21.6b (separately circulated)
- 9 Considering the usefulness of '[Building for a Healthier Life](#)' and deciding how to incorporate it into the neighbourhood plan
- 10 Noting relevant Wiltshire Council planning decisions, progress with the Local Plan, and NPPF updates – Paper 21.7
- 11 Agreeing dates for meetings August to November
- 12 Identifying business for meeting 22 in August

20.1

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

20.2

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

20.3/4

The minutes of steering group meeting 19 on May 9th were approved.

SM reported back on minute 19.5. The land adjacent to St George's Court is managed by a St George's resident group. It was agreed that it was not suitable for designation as a green space.

PS commented on minute 19.9 that in response to his message to Michelle Donelan MP, her office manager had been in contact saying that pressure would continue to be put on the Department for Levelling Up (etc) for a speedy resolution of the delay in funding Locality.

20.5

The Chair reported that the Parish Council (as the Qualifying Body) approved the following recommendations from the steering group:

- 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.

The Parish Council also requested that the steering group keep parishioners up-to-date with developments. It was noted that the decision had been clearly set out in the PC minutes and reported in the parish magazine.

20.6/7/8 – in closed session**20.9**

KL outlined the process and actions now needed to prepare for Regulation 14 consultation. This is the first *formal* consultation with the community and has to be at least 6 weeks long. The core of the documentation will be the policies that we have developed. Assuming that there does not have to be a full Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) undertaken on the Plan, it was agreed to aim to hold this from September 1st to October 14th 2023. The focus of Regulation 14 is to seek the views of those who live and work in the parish. It does not focus on approval or support, but it is important to gauge this when looking ahead to referendum.

KL stressed that care was needed at this stage to ensure that all procedural steps were followed to the letter to militate against any objections. This will necessitate clear publicity for the consultation and opportunities for the community to engage with the proposals. Clear start and end dates are essential. It was agreed that documents would be placed on-line and be available in paper copy in the village hall. Posters might be created. HT was asked to draft a two-sided A5 summary document that could be available at the fete on July 22nd to alert villagers to the consultation. **Action HT – completed and on agenda**

Statutory consultees also need to be contacted. These are: adjoining parish councils, Wiltshire Council, the Canal & Rivers Trust, the Coal Authority, Highways England, English Heritage, Natural England, Environment Agency among others.

David Way will be asked to confirm the Statutory consultees and their contacts. **Action BS – completed**

Documentation will be drawn up by the steering group using Place Studio's tool kit and template letters. These will now be sent to the SG. **Action KL – completed**

BS and HT were asked to prepare a first draft [**Action HT / BS**] prior to an informal SG meeting around the end of June to prepare a draft for the next SG meeting on July 11th. **Action PS to arrange**

20.10

A draft developer engagement protocol was discussed and welcomed. One edit was agreed and a revised paper will be forwarded to KL. **Action BS – completed**

The document will be forwarded to the PC Clerk with a request that it be placed on the June PC agenda with a view to the council adopting the protocol. **Action BS – completed and on agenda**

20.11

KL introduced the well-established and widely-valued document '[Building for a Healthier Life](#)'. This needs to be referenced in the neighbourhood plan, in the design / character sections. Everyone was asked to read this prior to a discussion at the next meeting. **Action All**

20.12

A comment from a parishioner on the climate change survey and its reporting was noted.

20.13

The local business and climate change reports were formally signed off.

20.14

It was noted that Wiltshire Council planners turned down the application to build 30 houses to the south of Pound Lane. This was largely because the land in question lies in a flood plain. Whether the developer can overcome this obstacle remains to be seen.

The Wiltshire Local Plan is expected to go to Wiltshire Council cabinet in July with formal consultation in the Autumn. It will be some time for the Local Plan to progress through inspection and ultimately adoption. Until then, the County's Core Strategy continues to be a key part of the Local Development Plan for Wiltshire though it is deemed out of date (this means where the housing requirement as set out in strategic policies is more than five years old).

Wiltshire Council has announced that its 5-year housing land supply was now 4.6 (May 2023). This has dropped from 4.7 (May 2022).

In relation to NPPF revisions, Wiltshire Council and PINS continue to work as if there have been no changes to it, despite press assertions to the contrary. The current NPPF continues to be the one dated July 2021 and no response to the consultation held earlier this year by the Government has been published. Although our MP wrote in May's Parish Magazine that "the levelling up secretary has changed the rules" for council with up-to-date local plans, this does not affect Wiltshire because its local plan is not up-to-date. Cllr Seed will be asked about this at the June parish council meeting.

Action BS completed

20.15

The next meeting is on Tuesday July 11th at 1930. The business will include:

- Considering draft paperwork and policies for the Regulation 14 submission – and the draft explanatory flier
- Preparing for the village fete

- Considering plans for Reg 14 consultation.
- Considering [Building for a Healthier Life](#)
- Wiltshire Council planning decisions, the Local Plan and NPPF revisions
- Agreeing dates for August, September, October, November.

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Drafted June 7th 2023

The aim of this Protocol is to do all possible to ensure that new development in Semington is done to a high standard which reflects local issues and aspirations. Its use will contribute to improved outcomes for the current and future communities, as well as assisting applicants to make applications that accord with the aims of the Parish Council, as community representatives, the Neighbourhood Plan (at the emerging stages and when 'made' following a positive referendum result) and with those of Wiltshire Council. It is crucial for success with these aims for the community engagement to start very early in the preparation of applications, working with the communities of Semington via the Parish Council.

Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Semington Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process has been agreed and followed.

Context

The revised **National Planning Policy Framework** (2021) highlights the considerable value of pre-application involvement, for example in paragraph 39:

"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."

and in support of this protocol, extract from paragraph 132:

"Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot."

(All the relevant extracts from the revised NPPF are appended.)

The "**10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement**"¹ published by a group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

"Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs."

The Wiltshire Council "**Statement of Community Involvement**"² (SCI) 2020 states that it encourages:

"developers and applicants to engage with local people and communities including Town and Parish Councils and with neighbours, when appropriate, before submission of a planning application. ... The government have stated that such engagement is discretionary, but it is strongly encouraged by the Council prior to the submission of applications for ten or more houses, or other large developments on sites of 1 hectare or more."

It is the view of Semington Parish Council that, for their community, the above should also apply to smaller developments because these can have at least as much impact on small settlements such as those in Semington Parish, as on larger settlements.

The SCI outlines in detail how communities can be involved in planning applications. The Parish Council acknowledges that whilst in the early stages of considering a development proposal, applicants may wish for any discussions with Wiltshire Council to be confidential, involvement of the local community can and should happen at the earliest possible stage.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-topics/planning-applications/10-commitments-effective-pre-application-engagement>

² <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1088/Statement-of-Community-Involvement>

Process

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, potential applicants should work with Semington Parish Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **'Day One' contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Parish Council, and through us with our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive.
- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed.³
- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant's role to lead and fund engagement, the Parish Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the parish. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential methods to contact and engage them. The methods should include traditional approaches such as exhibitions and leaflets but should also maximise contacts and responses through the use of social media.
- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Final Reporting:** The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report – a full 'audit trail' - describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement, showing how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it.⁴

(The Wiltshire SCI suggests that "this should take the form of a statement of community involvement outlining what public consultation has been carried out and how the results of the exercise have been taken into account in the submitted application".)

Initial contact should be made at the very outset with the Parish Council's Clerk.⁵ The Parish Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial open meeting as soon as possible following this contact. The Parish Council may also request additional consultation if particularly significant local issues emerge from any list of reserved matters associated with an application.

Semington Parish Council fully support and endorse all of the above and will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application involvement with themselves and the wider Parish community as proposals come forward.

³ There is considerable benefit for applicants in also sharing any process with Wiltshire Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it.

⁴ As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an engagement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

⁵ clerksemingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com

Appendix: NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2021 EXTRACTS

Para. 39: *"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."*

Para. 40: *"Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications."*

Para. 41: *"The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits. For their role in the planning system to be effective and positive, statutory planning consultees will need to take the same early, pro-active approach, and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process. This assists local planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs."*

Para 132: *"Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. **Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.**"*

Our emphasis in bold.

SNPSG Paper 21.7 Semington House Builds 2006 to 2026

Year	#	Location	No. Houses	No. Affordable	Current Status
2007	07/02532	Turnpike	12	12	Built
2012	12/01066	Pound Close	1	0	Built
2014	14/04565	Pound Close	1	0	Built
2019	19/04362	Aiden's Field Farm	1	0	Built
2019	19/07938	Kendall Lane, St George's Road	24	6	Building being finished *
2020	20/02822	The Knapps / St George's Road	1	0	Built
2022	22/03673	Off the High Street	1	0	Full PP
2023	22/01367	South of St George's Road	18	5	Full PP
2020	20/01306	West of Tennis Court	26	13	Outline PP
			85	36	

2023	22/09397	South of Pound Lane	30	10	Refused
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* Most are now occupied