

Semington Neighbourhood Planning
Minutes of Steering Group Meeting 6 March 23rd 2022
1930 to 2130 in the village hall / zoom



- 6.1 Those steering group members present: Vicky Bodman VB, Sheralyn Milburn SM, Bill Scott BS, Peter Smith PS, and Ian Williamson IW. Katie Lea KL (Place Studios) and Hugh Turnbull HT attended by video link. Apologies were received from Emma Day.
- 6.2 There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.
- 6.3/4 The minutes of steering group meeting 5 on 2nd February were approved, and the updated information set out in the minutes was noted. The following were also noted: a payment of £1524.97 to Place Studios; approaches from three land developers and the holding responses given; and the parish council's revised stance on housing developments in the parish which was seen as very helpful for the neighbourhood planning process. It was agreed that the parish council should be asked to inform Wiltshire Council that these decisions had been made. **Action PS**
- 6.5 [6.5.1] The outcomes of the community consultation on March 5th were reviewed. It was agreed that the reports provided by Place Studios captured the dynamic of the consultation event and its outcomes. After editing to note the decisions taken at this meeting (see below), the summary report will be circulated to all those who came to the event, and to critical friends, together with a link to the full report. **Action VB**

The summary report will be placed on the village hall notice board and, if possible, inserted into the April parish magazine. **Action PS**

The wording of the summary report will be agreed and the full report will have missing details added, and will have the texts agreed at this meeting (see below) added as appendices. **Action WS / HT / KL**

The summary report and completed full report will be added to the website and the community Facebook page. **Action VB**

Place Studios will provide links to a consultation proforma **Action KL** for draft completion **Action BS**

[6.5.2] After consideration of the feedback received at the March 5th community consultation, changes to the mini-vision, vision, and objectives statements were agreed. The change to the mini-vision was to make "landscape" plural. Three small changes were made to the vision to emphasise the significance of tourism, the importance of IT to businesses in the village, and the contribution that landscapes make to the character of settlements and the parish.

[6.5.3] Two kinds of changes were made to the objectives:

Firstly, a number of wording changes were made: the Kennet & Avon canal is now specifically mentioned; the importance of social facilities is stressed; and the phrase "low carbon" was changed to "carbon neutral" to bring it in line with the parish council's preferred terminology.

Secondly, looking at the objectives in the round, it was decided [i] to merge objectives 7 & 10 as these had turned out to be very similar; and [ii] to remove objective 4 as community feedback had shown this to be confusing, and it was felt on reflection that the issues it identified could be dealt with through policies linked to other objectives.

The revised statements are set out in an appendix to these minutes.

[6.5.4] In a review of how the 8 objectives matched the topic areas that were used in the community consultation (Board 7), it was decided, because of the feedback received, to have Community Facilities as an additional area. The five agreed areas are now:

Rural Living and Working
Community Facilities

Environment and Wellbeing
Sustainability and Climate Change

Housing and Development

It was noted that the bulleted text associated with the topic areas was only a set of outline ideas to aid policy development; in effect, “signposts” pointing to possible evidence that would be used to refine policies. A statement of how the 5 topic areas match the 8 objectives is set out in an appendix to these minutes.

[6.5.5] It was agreed to set up working groups (including critical friends and others where appropriate) for each of the five topic areas in order to prepare draft policies. The groups will use Place Studios tool kits to gather evidence around the draft policies and, in the light of this evidence, review and revise the policies with reports coming back to the steering group for consideration and decision. For example, the Environment and Wellbeing working group will look at protecting green spaces by sketching a draft policy based on the feedback so far, then identifying where are these green spaces and how we might go about protecting them. This evidence will be fed back into the draft policy which may well need revision.

Place Studios will produce a rough draft of policies for use by the topic area leads. **Action KL** who noted that it was evidence that makes policies unique and specific to place, rather than policy wording itself.

[6.5.6] The following were identified as policy leads for the 5 working groups:

Rural Living and Working	IW (SC?)
Environment and Wellbeing	PS (JH?)
Housing and Development	WS (VB)
Community Facilities	SM (IW)
Sustainability and Climate Change	ED (HT)

NB, ED was also seen to have an over-arching remit to advise on involving young people in this work

Place Studios will guide / direct each working group through the provision of toolkits and will have a direct involvement in some of them. **Action KL**

It was agreed that significant progress towards having policies in place will be made by the village fête (July 23rd).

- 6.6 The issue of whether the Semington plan should include the allocation of land for development was discussed at length. The time-limited advantages of doing this in a jurisdiction with no five-year housing land supply were noted, as was significant weighting accruing to the planning process following the Regulation 14 stage of making the neighbourhood plan (around January 2023).

However, in considering whether to explore the allocation of land for development, this was not the only factor taken into account. A powerful argument was that there is considerable social value in consulting and involving the community on a matter so fundamental to the future of the village and parish, as everyone has a right to be involved in exploring the questions of land development and the trades-off these bring. The process will also improve our knowledge of land ownership and land-owner intentions, and of the land itself. It was resolved to explore the allocation of land for development. David Way will be consulted about publicising this intention, and AeCOM will be approached for technical support for surveys. **Action KL**

- 6.7 The quarterly return to Groundwork (grant funding) needs to be made before the end of March. **Action KL & VB** Government funding has now been confirmed for the 2022/23 period but the application process is not yet open. It was noted that there are sufficient funds available to us to operate before the next grant is received.

6.8 A number of the forthcoming steering group meeting were rearranged because of known absences. The confirmed dates are now: April 27th, June 1st, and June 29th. The village hall bookings need to be changed. **Action BS**

At the April meeting, business will include:

- An update on evidence collection in the topic areas
- A consideration of draft policies
- Progress with ACOM
- Noting emerging issues

Drafted March 24th 2022

Mini Vision

It's 2036. Semington is a great place to live, with its character and rural surroundings preserved. Small scale and sympathetic development has met a local need for housing and employment. Community life is flourishing, with facilities and services maintained or improved and precious buildings, landscapes and wildlife protected.

Vision

The distinctive rural setting of Semington parish provides a wildlife-rich buffer between neighbouring settlements in West Wiltshire. The Kennet and Avon Canal and Semington Brook wildlife corridors and the biodiversity within them are key elements in this. In 2036, the integrity of this buffer will continue to be maintained as an asset for both people and nature.

Any development of the settlements of Semington, Little Marsh and Littleton will be responsive to the economic, environmental and social needs of the people living and working here. There will be minimal housing development, all within walking distance of a range of community facilities and built to the highest environmental standards, in sympathy with the existing settlements and with minimum impact on landscape settings, ecology and heritage. New housing will reflect the prime need for affordable homes and for people wishing to downsize.

The significant landscape perspectives within the parish along the Kennet and Avon and the Brook, towards the iconic Roundway Down, and through the fields to Hilperton will be protected, being key contributors to settlement character. Green space, natural features and heritage sites will be protected and maintained, and infrastructure changes will have minimal impact on the actively rural character of the parish. The use and generation of renewable energy will increase and our community carbon footprint will be reduced.

In 2036, Semington will remain a place where people can move around easily and safely. Its many footpaths will have been improved, with easier access for older people and those with disabilities. Cycling access to local towns will be upgraded. The old A350 road lengths will remain restricted routes.

By 2036, the parish's play areas will be enhanced, the tennis court remain freely open to residents and visitors, the football pitch stay in use and the allotments will be flourishing.

The parish will continue to welcome a wide range of small businesses from farming (which underpins our actively rural character) to light engineering, tourism and services. More home working and businesses will be enabled through enhanced IT infrastructure. Existing community facilities – including the pub, church, school, village hall and post office – will be maintained and where possible enhanced.

The wide range of social groups in the parish will continue to build its community spirit, assisted by effective communications, both electronic and magazine-based.

Objectives

1. To maintain the parish's wildlife-rich open countryside and support farming and other businesses that determine and protect the unique setting, character and identity of Semington.
2. To provide the housing the community wants and needs in developments of appropriate size in the locations it approves and in a range of housing tenures and types, to meet the needs of young people, growing families and older residents.
3. To ensure any development is low carbon, built to a high quality and a locally distinctive design, to maintain the essential character of the settlements.
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon canal and the parish's significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural artifacts.
5. To retain and enhance the rights of way network and local green spaces in the parish that are of significant community value.
6. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational and service facilities in the parish for all ages.
7. To sustain and encourage a broad range of community facilities and business.
8. To improve broadband and phone connectivity, retain the post office, and enable communications within the parish providing for all age groups.

Appendix 2 Objectives and Topic Areas

OBJECTIVE	OUTLINE POLICY BY TOPIC AREA	OBJs
1. To maintain the parish’s wildlife-rich open countryside and support farming and other businesses that determine and protect the unique setting, character and identity of Semington.	1. Rural Living and Working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for well-designed and suitably located telecomms equipment to provide high quality communication • Support for rural business development • Footway and cycle way improvements, parking standards 	<p>9</p> <p>1</p> <p>6</p>
2. To provide the housing the community wants and needs in developments of appropriate size in the locations it approves and in a range of housing tenures and types, to meet the needs of young people, growing families and older residents.	2. Environment and Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & protect local green spaces that play an important role in some way, such as for recreation or tranquillity, from development pressure • Identify & protect local heritage assets which aren’t listed but are important locally • Identify & protect landscape gaps, and green corridors between Semington and Trowbridge and Melksham • Identify & protect wildlife corridors, and improve Biodiversity 	<p>15</p> <p>15</p> <p>5</p>
3. To ensure any development is low carbon, built to a high quality and a locally distinctive design, to maintain the essential character of the settlements.	3. Housing and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design policy to ensure new development is in keeping with existing character • Policy to address local housing needs (tenure / type) and affordability & support for self / custom build • Pre-application engagement policy to underpin early, genuine and positive engagement with the community in any potential developments in the Parish • The Neighbourhood Plan could also allocate a housing site – but only if there was local support and clear local benefit 	<p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>24</p> <p>13</p>
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon canal and the parish’s significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural artifacts.	4. Community Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance existing community facilities and support for more where there is an identified need. 	<p>24</p> <p>13</p> <p>23</p>
5. To retain and enhance the rights of way network and local green spaces in the parish that are of significant community value.	5. Sustainability and Climate Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to ensure that new developments are as energy efficient as possible, and local renewable energy generation is supported • Development proposals to accord with best practice sustainable construction methods, aiming for net Zero, and promote “Building With Nature” technique (this to include managing flood risk 	<p>789</p> <p>3</p>
6. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational, and service facilities within the parish for all ages.		
7. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational, and service facilities within the parish for all ages.		
8. To improve broadband and phone connectivity, retain the post office, and enable communications within the parish providing for all age groups.		