

Semington Neighbourhood Planning

Minutes of Steering Group Meeting 24 on November 14th 2023

1930 to 2130 Village Hall social club and by zoom



24.1

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

24.2

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

24.3/4

The minutes of steering group meeting 23 on September 12th were approved.

24.5

Progress with the SEA by AECOM was reported. Following two on-line meetings, AECOM have prepared a draft scoping report which had been circulated.

Two things were noted for raising with AECOM: [i] the odd finding that gas use within the village was relatively high compared to national data, and [ii] the failure to note that the pub was closed. It was agreed to contact AECOM about these and to confirm that the character statement should be included.

Action BS – completed

The scoping report would then be circulated to the statutory consultees by AECOM with 5 weeks being allowed for responses. Meanwhile, AECOM will be carrying on developing the full SAE report which will explore all the options open to us in making plan decisions. This is likely to reach us by mid-January. Once completed, the SAE will join the draft neighbourhood plan and be part of the community Reg 14 consultation. KL said that the latest version of the plan which had been sent to AECOM contained additions focused on habitats regulations; this included a new policy, and references to this policy in existing policies.

It was agreed to plan for Reg14 to commence in February 2024 thereby allowing time for planning and communication following the receipt of the AECOM report.

24.6

Comments received from developers about viability of their land were discussed. In the light of this, it was decided to ask Locality for a technical support package to gauge viability of the possible sites. **Action VB – completed**

We will write to developers thanking them for their responses. **Action BS – in hand**

24.7

The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (Phase II) was discussed. Only the new policy 19 (Green wedges) was identified as being relevant to Semington. This is consistent with our neighbourhood policies relating to landscape sensitivity. The parish council will be encouraged to respond in this vein through the consultation.

Action BS – completed

24.8

The Royal Assent for the Levelling Up (etc) Bill was considered along with implications for the NPPF. KL noted that the views expressed in Paper 24.3 were consistent with other professional opinions. The notes are set out here in the Appendix. There is no indication as to when any secondary legislation might be enacted.

24.9

The following were noted:

- Wiltshire Council's local plan remains open for consultation until November 22nd . The Parish Council has responded.
- There were no relevant Wiltshire Council planning decisions.

24.10

The dates of the next 2 meetings were agreed as:

- January 16th
- February 13th (provisional)

These will now be booked with the Village Hall. **Action BS – completed**

Business for the January meeting will include: the SEA report, viability assessment, and preparations for Reg 14.

.....
Drafted November 15th 2023

Approved January 16th 2024

Whilst it has received Royal Assent, the final version of the Act is yet to be published (as of November 6th), and secondary legislation has not yet been enacted.

According to consultancy [Lichfields](#), “most of the sections [in the Act] directly related to development management and plan-making have not commenced and will require secondary legislation”.

The [2022 explanatory notes](#) also set out the broad timetable that would see commencement in 2024 “changes to planning procedures will begin to take place from 2024, once the Bill has Royal Assent and associated regulations and changes to national policy are in place”.

Some keys points however are:

The emphasis of the National Planning Policy Framework will shift to guiding plan-making. Policies in the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that are intended to guide decision-making will be stripped out to form the basis of the promised National Development Management Policies that will take precedence over local plans as the primary policy guide for decision-making, the companion document to the Bill says. A [draft](#) version of the NPPF revisions was published in December 2022 - not sure when the update is due but I would have thought in the next month or so (a rumour is 23rd November)? It was in this consultation document that we saw the potential changes to the NPPF with regards to housing land supply for Local Authorities that had progressed their plan making

Under the “democracy” heading, the notes say that local plans, neighbourhood plans... “will be given more weight when decisions are made on applications so that there must be strong reasons to override the plan, providing communities more certainty”.

The scope of local plans will be limited to ‘locally specific’ matters, with ‘issues that apply in most areas’ to be covered by a new suite of national policies. The document says that the Bill “requires each local planning authority to prepare one local plan, with the content limited to locally specific matters such as allocating land for development, detailing required infrastructure and setting out principles of good design”.

A ‘simpler to prepare’ alternative to neighbourhood plans will be introduced. Under “neighbourhoods”, the notes say that the Bill introduces “a new neighbourhood planning tool called a ‘neighbourhood priorities statement’.