



## *Our plan – Our future*

### **Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan**

#### **Minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

21<sup>st</sup> May 2012, 5.00pm to 7.00pm, Guildhall

#### **PRESENT**

#### **REPRESENTING**

#### **Members of the Steering Group**

Bob May	Community
Liz Thomas	Community
Cllr. Lesley Durbin	Much Wenlock Town Council
Cllr. Mike Grace (Chair)	Much Wenlock Town Council
Cllr. Robert Stuart	Much Wenlock Town Council
Cllr. David Turner	Much Wenlock Town Council
Cllr. Milner Whiteman	Much Wenlock Town Council

#### **In Attendance**

Tim Coleshaw	Community
Mary Jacobs	Community
Simon Ross	Community
Charles Teaney	Community
Rachel Walmsley	Community
Jake Berriman	Shropshire Council
Gill Jones	Shropshire Council

#### **Minute Taker**

Robert Toft

#### **1. Chairman's Welcome**

Mike Grace welcomed those present to the meeting and noted that this meeting had been arranged to look specifically at the possible scope and content of the Neighbourhood Plan and progress on its themes.

#### **2. Apologies**

Vivien Bellamy	Community
Howard Horsley	Community
Matthew Green	Much Wenlock Town Council

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The following amendments were noted to the draft minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> May:

Item 5 (2<sup>nd</sup> Para, under "Survey Progress"): Replace "and 279 on-line responses" with "David Turner noted that there had so far been 279 on-line responses".

Subject to this point the minutes were **approved**.

#### **5. Reviewing Progress on the Plan and Themes**

##### Reflections on Previous Work

Mike Grace invited members to reflect on what had taken place so far and to consider in particular issues of governance, the process to date and in the future, and specific issues and concerns which might arise,

Jake Berriman questioned whether good use had been made of those who had volunteered to help with the Plan. David Turner thought that they had been under-utilised and had perhaps not been fully communicated with. He wondered whether a volunteers co-ordinator should have been appointed. Robert Stuart agreed and noted that there were not enough volunteers at survey delivery stage. Lesley Durbin noted that it had, however, been agreed to keep the number of those involved to a manageable size. Mary Jacobs noted that it was important to get more young people involved.

David Turner noted that there been little information back from the public since the initial meetings despite several invitations to comment. Gill Jones said that she had heard several comments from respondents who felt that they did not know enough to complete some of the questions in the survey.

Milner Whiteman said that not all volunteers were willing to knock on doors. He noted that some recipients had thought the questionnaire too long. Jake Berriman noted, however, that the Kinnerley questionnaire was 28 pages long.

Mike Grace wondered if the committee/steering group structure needed to change. Bob May and Robert Stuart thought that the existing structure was working well.

Jake Berriman noted that different skills would be needed as the plan development went forward. David Turner and Liz Thomas observed that continuity was also important. Charles Teaney thought that it was important to find people who would accept responsibility for discrete areas of work.

Robert Stuart wondered whether the scope of the plan should have been decided after the initial meetings since it was possible that some areas of interest might not be included in the final Plan. Jake Berriman noted that it would have to be possible to concentrate on

specific areas. Mike Grace thought that it was likely that there would be have criticism if the scope had been narrowed at an early stage. Bob May thought that the early consultations had not expanded the scope since this was already quite broad at that stage.

Mike Grace summed up by noting that continued energy and adequate resource would be needed in the future stages and in particular people who could take tasks through to completion.

### Content Development

David Turner thought that the potential content of the Plan had narrowed. Robert Stuart thought that there were questions of how to include all issues raised by participants and respondents, in particular non land-use issues such as public transport.

Bob May wondered whether the Plan document should reflect the structure of the Shropshire Council Core Strategy. Jake Berriman said that the tested element of the Plan was spatial planning, but noted that it could contain other chapters and he would encourage this. He noted that the spatial elements needed to be clear since these would go forward to the referendum. Milner Whiteman thought that other elements could be included as aspirations. Jake Berriman noted that some of these could be linked to the Place Plan.

Milner Whiteman and Mike Grace thought that the format of the plan should be essentially simple and not too long. Robert Stuart asked what would then be left out to achieve this. Liz Thomas and Mike Grace thought that this might be achieved through summaries with links to appendices and other documents. Jake Berriman thought that the Plan's authors would want to preserve a local flavour to the document but include references to other plans as appropriate.

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

(Minute Taker's Note: For this item all elements noted by meeting participants are recorded without attribution. The name of the speaker introducing each theme is indicated.)

#### ***Housing needs (Lesley Durbin)***

##### Strengths

- Community support for meeting local needs for affordable housing;
- Good schools available at primary and secondary levels for young families;
- Shropshire Council consultants can inform discussions on proportions of affordable housing;
- Potential Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income for community.

### Weaknesses

- Difficulty in achieving number of affordable houses required (according to revealed need) since developers only provide about 13% of new development and this proportion would require building of more than 500 homes to meet need;
- Infill development does not meet affordable housing content;
- Out-of-town development and multi-level dwellings will not meet needs of aging population;
- Not using up/lack of evidence on currently empty properties;
- Lack of open space/play facilities on south side of town.

### Opportunities

- Small exception sites can raise proportion of affordable housing;
- Bring unused properties into occupation;
- Neighbourhood Plan can make balanced recommendations to developers, can suggest better communication by developers and propose vehicles such as trusts which demonstrate commitment to community;
- More housing will provide greater potential for employment and community development.

### Threats

- Landowners may not be able to meet needs;
- Aging population;
- Increased commuter settlement;
- Changes to housing benefit affecting single people;
- Lack of interest from specialised developers;
- Environmental considerations may limit development.

## ***Creating a sustainable community (Simon Ross)***

### Strengths

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Shropshire planning documents give considerable support for this theme;
- Sustainable development has positive effect in other areas e.g. reduction of flooding load/re-use of water, lower carbon footprint.

### Weaknesses

- Lack of agreement on defining a sustainable community, applying this locally and securing support;
- Comments on sustainable issues at launch events limited largely to transport, cycling and wind power.

### Opportunities

- Possibilities of achieving low carbon emissions through a variety of means, including housing;
- Including land allocation for local wood fuel/food production (subject to support in residents' survey) and inviting developers to put forward proposals;
- Potential to reduce fuel bills and put savings into local community;
- Alternative energy solutions may create jobs;
- Discussion with landowners on sustainable use of land e.g. use of former quarries by National Trust (NT);
- To be proactive in engaging with the challenges that are driving the need to create a sustainable community - debt crisis, rising fuel prices, climate change, wildlife destruction. This should create opportunities for the Parish around community, well-being and job creation.

### Threats

- Need to make stark choices about development outcomes;
- Global threats, notably climate change;

- Remaining largely disengaged from these issues, reacting to events as they unfold and thus becoming victims

### ***Jobs and the local economy (David Turner and Bob May)***

David Turner noted that the business survey questionnaire had been sent to Shropshire Community Council who had indicated that they could take on the survey work but had not yet responded further.

#### Strengths

- Attractive place to locate (though little recent development);
- NPPF and Shropshire Core Strategy provide supportive environment.

#### Weaknesses

- Not many obvious business sites available and existing business land not fully taken up/of poor quality;
- Few existing premises available , particularly serviced premises;
- Lack of understanding of potential of town for niche use and do not have views from Shropshire Council/Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on role of Much Wenlock;
- Not a large workforce base;
- Evidence required from business survey for which timescale has slipped.

#### Opportunities

- Business survey in preparation;
- Matching existing need with landowners' plans;
- Possibility of exploiting niche markets and developing micro businesses;
- Discussing with Shropshire Council and LEP how to deliver and create a "package" for the town;
- Location may attract entrepreneurial young and/or retiring people.

## ***Threats***

(None identified)

## ***Protecting our local environment (Tim Coleshaw)***

### *Strengths*

- High quality environment;
- Environment can attract investment;
- Increased public footpaths.

### *Weaknesses*

- Lack of accessible green space;
- Historic environment under pressure from traffic;
- Gaskell Recreation Ground heavily used and needs better management.

### *Opportunities*

- Accessible green infrastructure, notably woodland and quarries;
- Increased woodland would help reduce flooding;
- NT development/tourism gives opportunity for jobs and local economy.

### *Threats*

- Threats to environment through infrastructure development;
- Quarry development may not happen;
- Excessive tourism;
- Containment of activities within town "bowl" can create pressures;
- Vulnerability of 750 foot contour line.

## ***Improving community services (Robert Stuart)***

### Strengths

- Considerable amount of previous work undertaken in much of this area;
- Less heavy commercial traffic from quarries.

### Weaknesses

- Two major traffic pinch points;
- Increased need for car parking and shortage of available space;
- Inadequate sewage capacity.

### Opportunities

- Benefit of NT quarry development to tourism and jobs (provided properly managed);
- NT development may lead to review of need for by-pass;
- Housing design can help address parking space needs;
- Use of new temporary car park to address long-term/new tourist pressures;
- Flooding – seeking to resolve issue through design criteria and alleviation of threat;
- Flooding – Linking with environmental solutions.

### Threats

- Increased traffic levels likely;
- NT quarry developments will generate significant additional traffic;
- Difficulty of explaining problems and solutions clearly.

(David Turner and Milner Whiteman left the meeting)

### Actions Needed to Progress Plan

Workshops - Robert Stuart noted that the first workshop should include a session developing understanding of infrastructure issue including flooding and traffic. Jake



Berriman emphasised the need to seek clarification and start to explore policy options, including those identified from survey results. He noted the importance of ensuring that the business community had been fully engaged. Robert Stuart suggested targeting workshops in order to attract specific demographic groups and those harder to reach. Jake Berriman suggested that storyboarding the whole Plan would help to shape it.

(Jake Berriman and Robert Stuart left the meeting)

Simon Ross thought that a map of local land use would be valuable. Mike Grace emphasised the importance of engaging landowners in discussions.

Rachel Walmsley noted the need to consider what was going on elsewhere in other plans. Mike Grace asked if Shropshire Council could provide a feed-in of current initiative and non-Core Strategy policy/guidance of relevance to Much Wenlock.

**ACTION: Gill Jones to provide information on these issues to the Steering Group.**

Mary Jacobs thought that it would be important to develop a strategy for engaging volunteers.

Simon Ross thought that the further stages of the Plan could provide opportunities for celebrating the positive aspects of the town, reflecting how it felt to live there. It was agreed that this should be included as part of the introduction to the Plan. Lesley Durbin noted that this would require a skilful writer.

(Gill Jones left the meeting)

Mike Grace asked if there were any areas which should not be forgotten in future discussions. Lesley Durbin noted the importance of good design in affordable housing. Mike Grace noted that community, youth and health facilities should be considered.

(Liz Thomas left the meeting)

Mary Jacobs mentioned the need to consolidate volunteer lists and to communicate with volunteers.

**ACTION: Mary Jacobs and Robert Toft to co-ordinate existing volunteer lists.**

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

The next regular meeting had previously been agreed to be on 28th May, starting at 5.00 p.m. in the Guildhall.