



Our plan – Our future

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

12th November 2012, 4.00pm to 7.00pm, Guildhall

PRESENT

REPRESENTING

Members of the Steering Group

Tim Coleshaw	Community
Bob May	Community
Charles Teaney	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

Mary Jacobs	Community
Gill Jones	Shropshire Council

Minute Taker

Robert Toft

1. Chairman's Welcome

Mike Grace welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Rachel Walmsley	Community
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3. Declarations of Interest

David Turner declared a possible bias with regard to land proposal "A" (Bradley Farm) which was near to his home and noted that he would leave the meeting if it was discussed. No other members had biases or pecuniary interests to declare.

It was **agreed** that "Dispensation and Bias" should be added under this agenda item for future meetings.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The following amendments were noted to the draft minutes of the meeting of 5th November:

Item 5 (4th Para, Line 1) Replace "accepted under the previous" with "previously proposed under the current";

Item 5 (8th Para, Line 1) Replace "general" with "market";

Item 5 (10th Para, Line 2) Replace "of businesses" with "on businesses";

Item 5 (12th Para, Line 2) Replace "proposals they might meet" with "objectives they might meet";

Item 5 (15th Para, Line 2) Add " in the residents survey and at public consultation events" after "number of respondents";

Item 5 (21st to 23rd Paras) Re-position these paragraphs after the 18th paragraph.

Subject to these points, the minutes of the meeting of 5th November were **approved**.

5. Developing the Scope and Content of the Plan

To consider and review suggestions for premises and land

Mike Grace noted that Rachel Walmsley had produced a chart summarising written responses from consultees and the community. He had also updated the summary list of proposals to include those received after 27th October, including three from Shropshire Council. Both of these papers had been circulated to members. In response to a question from Liz Thomas, he noted that these two documents were supplemented by a list of comments made at the October consultation events, which had been previously circulated to members.

Charles Teaney wondered whether a resident who had concerns on Proposal "D" (Land south of Stretton Road) should be informed that a further proposal "P" (Land fronting Stretton Road) affecting part of this land had been received after the initial deadline of 27th October. Bob May and Robert Stuart thought that the resident should not be informed formally since this would set a difficult precedent and other residents had also not had the chance to view or comment on proposals received after 27th October. Agreed that David Turner would informally inform the resident that a further proposal had been received.

(Tim Coleshaw arrived at the meeting)

Lesley Durbin noted that the Tree Forum had sent in views which did not seem to have been recorded. David Turner thought that their response was available on the website.

Mike Grace noted that there were three types of public comments to consider:

- i) Written comments and comments made on the objectives at consultation events which had been transcribed and assembled;
- ii) Responses to the residents survey which had been analysed and summarised in the Community Council of Shropshire (CCS) report;
- iii) Comments on land proposals made at consultation events and attached to a map which had not yet been transcribed and assembled.

Mike Grace asked whether the objective assessment template he had prepared had been used on the site "walkabout" on 10th November. Charles Teaney said that it had been used but those taking part (Bob May, Lesley Durbin, Milner Whiteman, David Turner and Charles Teaney) had not felt that scoring was appropriate at the time and they had concentrated on noting strengths and weaknesses. **Agreed** by those involved that the note made by Charles Teaney was an accurate record of views and observations.

It was **agreed** to consider the land proposals in the alphabetic order in which they had been identified.

Land Proposal "A" - Bradley Farm - Riding for Disabled

(David Turner left the meeting room)

Mike Grace noted that land availability assessment forms for this proposal had now been received.

Bob May thought that, whilst the proposal included features which were useful in developing the Plan, it was not appropriate to respond to the specific site proposal as such but rather to include relevant aspects in policy criteria. Milner Whiteman agreed and noted that the proposal was speculative at this stage and when finalised should be submitted through the normal planning process.

Mike Grace noted that the purposes of identifying sites was to give certainty and to take advantage of landowner proposals. He thought it important to identify specific policy criteria and the benefits these might give.

(Gill Jones arrived at the meeting)

Lesley Durbin thought that development of the site should include provision for the community. Robert Stuart noted that the current proposal was specific to the disabled. Mike Grace noted that it was possible to say what would be required from a site, such as community provision. Bob May noted that public access, habitat protection and conditions on further development were also important. Tim Coleshaw emphasised the importance of woodland retention.

Mike Grace summarised the important protection factors as tranquillity, landscape, biodiversity, quality of design and sustainability. The intention was that these should be converted into policies.

It was **agreed** that a policy approach should be taken with regard to this proposal from which useful contributions to the objectives could be made.

Liz Thomas asked how tourism issues generally were to be addressed. Mike Grace noted that they were relevant under several objectives notably in connection with transport and traffic management.

(Mary Jacobs arrived at the meeting)

(David Turner returned to the meeting room)

Land Proposal "B" - Homer Farm

Bob May asked whether there was not an existing Shropshire Council policy for smaller settlements, including Homer. Milner Whiteman and Lesley Durbin noted that the policy for sites outside the Much Wenlock development boundary was to permit only affordable housing development using exception sites and not to actively encourage employment development.

Mike Grace noted that the site was within the Shropshire Hills AONB area and would thus be subject to further restrictive policies.

It was suggested that the proposal for this site had no convincing reasons for it to be allowed to be developed. However, it was **agreed** that a site visit would be undertaken.

Land Proposal "C" - Land east of Bridgnorth Road

Milner Whiteman and Lesley Durbin noted that it would be necessary to undertake further discussions with the owner.

Mike Grace asked members to identify specific positive aspects of the proposal. Bob May noted that the rating scale might need to change to allow marks from -5 to +5 to reflect the contributions of sites to meeting or detracting from objectives. Milner Whiteman thought the flooding alleviation was important and noted that there was provision for some green space and a pond. Charles Teaney noted that a large number of survey respondents had identified Bridgnorth Road as a development site.

Milner Whiteman noted that the site was low down, below the town bowl and within walking distance of the centre. David Turner noted that the proposed roundabout would reduce the impact on traffic. Gill Jones noted that it was also near to the primary school. Bob May noted possible employment opportunities.

Mike Grace then asked members to identify specific negative aspects of the proposal. Lesley Durbin noted that it did not provide enough green space, was too far away from existing leisure facilities and open space and thus needed further provision incorporating on site. She added that the town had been assessed as having insufficient available open space in 2003 and noted that further development had taken place since. Bob May noted that there was an open space area on the Hunter's Gate estate though this had not been designated as such.

Bob May thought that the visual impact of housing next to Bridgnorth Road needed consideration. Lesley Durbin noted that there was a hedgerow protection order on the site which had gone to appeal (with the appeal being dismissed).

Charles Teaney noted that the site could include more open space and asked how much was needed. Lesley Durbin noted that Shropshire Council had set an existing policy for this.

Mike Grace noted that there appeared to be more scope for meeting the objectives with a modified proposal including less housing development. Robert Stuart noted that infill development provided no additional open space and thus larger developments might be needed to provide this.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that the proposal had a definite potential with some merits but other demerits. Possibly mixed use development would better meet the objectives and a further conversation with the landowner was thus desirable.

Agreed that a second site visit should be undertaken.

Land Proposal "D" - Land south of Stretton Road

Milner Whiteman noted that this involved the existing temporary car park and land owned by Wenlock Estates. Tim Coleshaw noted that he had looked at the car park section which was relatively well screened, being lower than the road with fairly good access but without existing provision of all services.

Milner Whiteman thought that the Wenlock Estates site was too big and felt that development should not extend beyond the car park, since a large area was not needed for employment land. David Turner noted that part of the site had been on the market for some years without interest and thought that a bigger site was very unlikely to be more popular.

Mike Grace noted that it was important to look at sites generally within the context of employment to assess their potential against this objective. Bob May said that consideration should be given as to whether the existing designation of employment land in the town should be kept.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that the car park area seemed to have some potential as a site for industrial development but the larger area proposed had less merit and some

notable demerits including the impact on landscape and effect on the flooding attenuation pond.

Agreed that a second site visit should be undertaken.

Land Proposal "E" - Lady Forester Nursing Home

Bob May noted that it was difficult to evaluate the proposal without knowing exactly where the development was proposed. He added that, since it was within the town development boundary, it could be dealt with as a standard planning application.

David Turner thought that the proposal might be for housing development for which permission had already been given and that it would be necessary to seek clarification of this. Milner Whiteman thought it was important to establish whether the development was connected to the nursing home.

Robert Stuart and Charles Teaney noted that there were possible flooding and traffic issues.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that, as a stand-alone housing development, the proposal was not likely to be supported but housing linked to the nursing home could be, particularly if traffic and flooding issues could be resolved. He noted that support for the nursing homes could be included as a policy issue.

Land Proposal "F" - Wenlock Edge Quarries

Robert Stuart noted that the National Trust did not own the quarry land, though they owned adjoining land.

Robert Stuart wondered whether a map of quarries was available. Lesley Durbin thought that the policy on quarries should reflect relevant aspects of all nine objectives.

Robert Stuart noted that the Lea Quarry proposal was particularly significant because of its scale and possible transport issues and its potential for creating a green corridor.

Agreed that a policy was needed for re-use of all quarry land within the area of the Plan.

Land Proposal "G" - Land north of Stretton Road

Tim Coleshaw noted that the site was quite small, adjacent to existing development, was screened and had straightforward access but he thought that distance from shopping areas was an issue.

Liz Thomas thought that it might help in developing a green pathway. Tim Coleshaw thought that it was probably too small for this purpose and was currently a grassland meadow.

David Turner noted that bungalows were proposed, although the site was far from the town centre.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that the proposal had some merits and would define the edge of the town but it would extend the extent of the town and had some access problems.

Agreed that a second site visit should be undertaken.

Land Proposal "H" - Land opposite petrol station/Hodgecroft

Bob May noted that, as a proposed site for a health or police facility, the site had drawbacks in that part of it lay uphill, access to part of it was not good and that the lower part had a number of mature trees. Milner Whiteman noted that the site had been considered for potential development for many years.

Lesley Durbin wondered if the site could be designated as green space. Mike Grace thought that it could be but noted that this did not promote development, although it could be valuable as a defensive policy.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that the proposal was not seen as suitable for development for health facilities due to access issues, likely congestion, height at the top end and the lack of any proposal/demand for new facilities. It did, however, offer an opportunity as green space, for which it was well sited.

Land Proposal "I" - land to the west of Walton Grange

Milner Whiteman thought that the site was too far out and high up for the proposed caravan/camping development. Liz Thomas noted that the site could be seen clearly from some distance and thought that the effect on the landscape would not be good.

In summary, Mike Grace noted that the site was too visible, high, isolated and exposed with limited access.

Charles Teaney proposed a site visit, which was **agreed**.

Mike Grace noted that the points discussed were relevant in considering leisure developments generally.

Gill Jones thought that the quality of discussion of the planning proposals at the current meeting had been high.

To design and agree further activity to develop the scope and content of the Neighbourhood Plan

Agreed to make further site visits on Thursday 15th November including sites not visited on 10th November and sites discussed at the current meeting in Bridgnorth Road and Stretton Road. Those attending would include Mike Grace, Robert Stuart, David Turner, Liz Thomas and, possibly, Charles Teaney.

Mike Grace asked about the future use of Planning Aid. He thought that their involvement had been useful although facilitation at the last event had proved problematic. Bob May noted that the brief for this event had been difficult and thought that further use of Planning Aid would depend on the purpose of the event and what was expected of the facilitator. Mary Jacobs noted that engaging skilled facilitators was likely to prove costly.

Mike Grace noted that there would be one further meeting of the Group to discuss proposals, followed by meetings with landowners and discussion and testing of options. The technical writer would then work on the results and another public event might then be held in mid-December.

Agreed to see if a public meeting could be linked to another event in December.

Charles Teaney noted that key dates were the Town Council approval of the Plan on 31st January 2013 and printing of the final plan by 14th February, on which other dates were consequential.

6. Media and Communications

Mike Grace noted that the site appraisal was not yet complete and thus the discussions should remain confidential at present. He thought that it would be possible to make these public after the next meeting when the minutes of the current meeting would be approved.

Agreed that the public message would be that the Group was working its way through the proposals but had not yet come to any final decisions.

(Charles Teaney left the meeting)

David Turner agreed to draft the next media release and noted that the front page of the website needed a story.

Agreed that the next article in the Wenlock Herald should contain the list of proposed sites and a note that other sites suggested by the public were also being considered.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Steering Group was **agreed** to be on 19th November, starting at 5pm in the Guildhall, with further meetings on 26th November and 3rd December. Further meetings would be held fortnightly after this date.

Signed _____
Chairman

Date _____