



Our plan – Our future

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

4th February 2013, 5.00pm 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

Rachel Walmsley	Community
Faith Smith	Technical Writer
Gill Jones	Shropshire Council

Minute Taker

Robert Toft

1. Chairman's Welcome

Mike Grace welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Mary Jacobs	Community
Jake Berriman	Shropshire Council

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest, Dispensation or Bias

There were no declarations of interest, dispensation or bias.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The following amendments were noted to the draft minutes of the meeting of 21st January:

Item 5 (11th Para, under "Housing Policies (Objective 1)", Line 2) Replace "legal appeal" with "appeal";

Item 5 (14th Para, under "Housing Policies (Objective 1)", Lines 1 and 2) Replace "a portion of site C in the Plan, with a restriction to 25 dwellings" with "site C in the Plan, with a restriction to 25 dwellings on a portion of the site";

Item 8 (2nd Para, Line 2) Replace "enforced consultation could" with "formal consultation would".

Subject to these points, the minutes of the meeting of 21st January were **approved**.

5. Developing the Scope and Content of the Plan

To Consider the Response of the Town Council to the Draft Plan

Mike Grace noted that the Town Council had approved the draft Plan at its meeting on 31st January and that the meeting had been short since no one had spoken against the proposals. He added that the proposals for consultation on and publicising of the draft Plan had also been agreed. Members had also approved the proposal for the Town Council to open a dialogue with housing providers, including housing associations.

Lesley Durbin thought that some comments on the plan concerning affordable housing were not valid since the respondents seemed to lack understanding of what was meant by "affordable housing". David Turner **agreed** to give prominence on the website to the definition of affordable housing.

(Robert Stuart arrived at the meeting)

Faith Smith thought that there was some danger of not understanding the Plan and attributing its proposals to the Steering Group rather than the wishes of the community. Charles Teaney noted that it would be important to explain the mechanism of how the Plan would work and, in particular, that it would continue to be Shropshire Council which made decisions on planning.

Liz Thomas noted that it would also be necessary to explain the concept of working with housing associations since this was a new role for the Town Council.

Robert Stuart noted that the Plan proposed an additional role for the Town Council including decisions on facilities and their continuing viability and assessing whether needs

had changed. He added that the Town Council and the community had responsibility for periodically reviewing the Plan. Liz Thomas noted that "periodically" was open to interpretation. Lesley Durbin wondered whether the Planning Committee of the Town Council could put in place a formal timetable for review of the Plan.

Mike Grace noted the need to present to the community what the implications of the plan were and what they might be in 10 years time.

Robert Stuart wondered if the Much Wenlock Design Statement needed stronger incorporation in the Plan.

To agree format and details of the formal 6-week public consultation

Mike Grace noted that the issues for discussion included the notice for the consultation, its format, involvement of statutory consultees and how to summarise and respond to comments. It was also necessary to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was required. He noted that Jake Berriman had thought that the Plan would probably not require an SEA but that this depended on the inclusion of site C (land east of Bridgnorth Road). Mike Grace queried whether an SEA would be needed with allocation of a portion of site C with a limit of 25 houses.

ACTION: Gill Jones to check with Jake Berriman whether an SEA was required.

Mike Grace noted that there were two alternative formats: a two-sided A2 sheet with text on one side and maps on the other or a booklet. David Turner thought that there would be potential problems with an A2 format in fitting all the text on one side but also issues with a booklet in that maps might not be easily legible. Bob May thought that the full text could not be fitted on to a single side of A2 and considered that the maps would not hold great interest in themselves. He suggested that a slimmed-down version of the text could be included on an A2 sheet and that there might be two versions for consultation. He thought that the booklet should be self-contained, including an introduction and information on how to comment and that it might be octavo sized.

Charles Teaney noted that he favoured a booklet because of the volume of text and suggested that MA Creative be asked to advise on the feasibility of including a map insert (which might be folded) or centre page map.

Bob May asked whether two maps were required. Mike Grace thought that this was necessary, with the parish map showing the boundaries.

(Tim Coleshaw arrived at the meeting)

Robert Stuart asked whether the consultation version had to be the final format of the Plan. Mike Grace thought that this was not necessary but noted that it did need to be legible and useful.

David Turner noted the need to think about the document which would go forward to the referendum and to avoid if possible doing matters twice. He thought that it might be difficult to translate the A2 version for the website. Mike Grace noted that changes could be made, if necessary, for the version to be presented to the assessor but that a version for the referendum also needed to be considered.

Faith Smith thought that the public consultation could be based on the A2 version with reference to the full text on the website. Bob May thought that if a booklet was issued to all households, it should be done only once, at the time of the referendum. He noted that costs also needed to be considered. Robert Stuart agreed but noted that there needed to be several means of obtaining the full version.

David Turner thought that flyers and notices in the Wenlock Herald and other publications with links to the full version might be possible. Bob May thought that this would not work and that there would be insufficient information in a flyer. He thought that a short booklet would be better and that volunteers might be engaged to deliver it.

Charles Teaney thought that the legal position on consultation was vague but noted that the assessor might raise objections if it was deemed that insufficient information had been made available. Robert Stuart noted that consultation had already taken place and thought that there was a danger of repetition in addition to the extra cost. He considered that an A4 double-page flyer would be sufficient. Gill Jones noted that issuing a document to everyone gave additional "insurance" that a full consultation could be shown to have taken place.

(Minute-Taker's Note: At this point the Chair agreed that Milner Whiteman could make a statement on his position with regard to quarries and the recent Shropshire Council consideration of a planning application related to Lea Quarry North since he had to leave the meeting early.)

Milner Whiteman noted that he had been at the Shropshire Council Planning Committee meeting at which the planning application made by Edge Renewables had been considered and approved. He noted that, although Edge Renewable had proceeded with development without permission and that the planning application was thus retrospective, this was not, in itself, a valid reason for rejection of the application. The Committee members had thus considered the proposal on its merits and he noted that several councillors had spoken in favour, noting that employment would be created and that some £25,000 would be spent by Edge Renewables in restoring the site including permissive paths. He noted that the National Trust's objection had been considered but that it had been noted that they had not been able to buy the land and that also a page in the report prepared for the Committee had included references to the draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan. He added that he had an open mind before attending the meeting but had been persuaded by the arguments made for the application.

Mike Grace noted that there had been some concern over the use of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the spin that had been placed on its proposals. Tim Coleshaw

noted that the residents' survey had shown that 46% of respondents had favoured redevelopment and that 73% had favoured identifying future industrial sites.

Mike Grace noted that it would be necessary to clarify the position of the Plan on quarry development.

(Milner Whiteman left the meeting)

Rachel Walmsley asked whether specific questions should be asked as part of the consultation on the Plan or comment invited on particular aspects on which opinion were sought. Bob May thought that including many questions should be avoided.

Rachel Walmsley thought that the next steps should be clearly explained including the referendum process. Mike Grace thought that an A3 folded booklet could be distributed with an explanation of the process on the front page, a map in the centre and an invitation to comment on the back.

Robert Stuart queried what the contents should be and noted that the rationales for the policies might be easier to read than the policy detail.

Lesley Durbin thought that a leaflet was better with the full Plan distributed at the time of the referendum.

Rachel Walmsley and Mike Grace **agreed** to draft the consultation leaflet.

Mike Grace noted that copies of the consultation leaflet could be made available earlier in public places allowing an earlier official start date for the consultation period.

Robert Stuart queried whether volunteers were best for distribution and suggested asking Mary Jacobs to advise on this. Charles Teaney thought that the Wenlock Herald might be used as a consultation vehicle. Bob May thought that the consultation could be publicised in the Press advising the consultation start date and be supplemented by an insert in the Wenlock Herald. Mike Grace noted that the consultation might then close at the end of March.

David Turner noted the need for the public to have clarity in how to respond and to manage expectations about what would happen to individual comments, which it might not be possible to take forward. Bob May thought that the invitation should be whether respondents supported or objected to the policies and to indicate any proposed changes.

Robert Toft advised (as editor of the Wenlock Herald) that it would be possible to include a two-page insert in the March Herald.

It was **agreed**:

- i) To include a two-page A4 coloured insert on the consultation in the March Wenlock Herald;
- ii) That the start date of the formal consultation would be 15th February;
- iii) That notices in the Press should be placed to advertise the consultation and its start date.

David Turner **agreed** to speak to MA Creative regarding the design of the insert for the Wenlock Herald.

It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk be asked to prepare the formal notice of consultation.

ACTION: Mike Grace to ask Sharon Clayton (Town Clerk) to prepare a formal notice of consultation for the local Press.

Faith Smith wondered about online consultation and whether respondents would need to submit an email. David Turner noted that an online consultation process might be set up, possibly involving Shropshire RCC (Rural Community Council) though he noted that this would be costly.

It was **agreed** that David Turner, Bob May, Charles Teaney and Mary Jacobs would look at the format of the online response.

It was **agreed** that statutory consultees should be sent a short letter with a link to the full draft and a copy of the consultation response table.

6. Plan Timetable and Process

Mike Grace noted that all comments on draft Plan should be received by the end of March. Charles Teaney noted that a statement of consultation, the Plan and other supporting documents would then need to be sent to Shropshire Council. He noted that the plan timetable allowed for two weeks to decide what to do about comments made and the reasons for addressing them or otherwise.

David Turner thought that the concerns of landowners and their agents would need consideration and also any comments received by the Town Clerk since the 12th January public events.

Mike Grace noted that support had been offered by Locality on helping to check the plan and its conformity with legal requirements.

ACTIONS:

- i) Mike Grace to send the draft Plan and draft consultation statement to Locality;**
- ii) Gill Jones to bring the checklist which should be completed by the Planning Authority to the attention of Jake Berriman.**

7. Budgets

It was **agreed** that MA Creative be used to design the insert for the Wenlock Herald and to ask the Neighbourhood Plan Committee of the Town Council to approve the spending in order that the Town Clerk could place the order.

It was **agreed** that a donation of £75 should be made to the Wenlock Herald in respect of the consultation insert to be included in the March issue.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Steering Group was **agreed** to be on 18th February 2013, starting at 5pm in the Guildhall, with further meetings at fortnightly intervals thereafter.

Signed _____
Chairman

Date _____