

# Sturminster Marshall Neighbourhood Plan

7.30pm Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Memorial Hall, Sturminster Marshall

## Steering Group Minutes

Present: Mr J Quick, Mr R Daniels, Cllr S Gerry, Cllr S Cade, Mr S Morris, Cllr Palmer, Cllr Steel and Ms Scotton

Mrs A Clothier (Clerk), Joanne Witherden

### 1. Apologies

- 1.1 There were apologies from Cllr H Fookes and Cllr J Jackson

### 2. Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 Mr Morris declared that he is a local landowner of a site adjacent to one of the proposed Local Plan sites. His land ownership is on his Declaration of Interest form and the group were aware of this. He has approached a local land agent to promote his land. He asked the committee whether they felt this was a conflict of interest and, if so, offered to resign from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The committee felt that conversations held at the meetings could benefit his application and put him at an unfair advantage. Ms Witherden commented that as the Neighbourhood Plan meetings were open and minuted then all the information is in the public domain anyway. Ms Witherden had worked with groups that have had landowners on the steering group – it is very important to ensure that the decision making process is open and transparent as public perception may be a problem. The group felt that this would be relevant to the Parish. Mr Morris left the room to allow the group to discuss this.
- 2.2 It was noted that Mr Morris had had many useful contributions to the process but there was a concern that the plan would be compromised due to his involvement. He should not have an influence over anything that would involve his site. Ms Witherden pointed out that if the scope of the plan is higher level and generic then there is no risk as it will not talk about specific sites. It was concluded that a decision on Mr Morris' involvement would be delayed until a decision had been made about the scope of the plan.

### 3. Minutes of previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December were circulated prior to the meeting. These were agreed.

### 3.2 Matters arising:

*Action 1.1: Clerk to inform O'Neil Homer that their application was not successful - **complete***

*Action 1.2: Clerk to submit funding form to Locality - **complete***

*Action 1.3: Groups to begin research on topic areas - **ongoing***

## 4. Update on Grant Funding Application

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Planning Group had submitted a request for funding for Consultancy services work taking place up to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. This was to include two project planning sessions, one attendance at the Steering Group and a Local Housing Needs assessment, to be undertaken by Joanne Witherden. The request was submitted but the funding provider advised that the Housing Needs Assessment be claimed for as a Technical Assessment as this was a separate grant pot and then leave more for things like consultation events etc. The grant request for the project planning and steering group attendance has been accepted and the money has been transferred to the Parish Council bank account.

## 5 Project Planning

- 5.1 Dorset Council's recent Local Plan engagement event was reported on. The Local Plan will be adopted in Spring 2023 and there is a duty to cooperate with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole which may involve accepting some of their housing target. The event looked at settlement hierarchy and what criteria villages would need to meet for a housing allocation. The focus is on growth in towns so there is no guarantee that the 250 home allocation, within EDDC's previous draft plan, will be carried over to the new Dorset Council plan. The possibility of a new town is being explored. The group will not know the proposed housing figures for the Parish area until the Options Consultation in the Autumn.

- 5.2 The first decision for the group to make is to determine the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. If the plan is to allocate sites then the timing of the Local Plan is crucial.

Ms Witherden advised that in the period before the Options consultation in the autumn it is better to get a working relationship with the Local Plan and use the information gathered to make a meaningful response. The Neighbourhood Plan can influence the design of new estates, safeguarding the Trailway and creating walking routes around the Parish but this will need development to fund it. It was noted that larger planned developments attract more community benefits, like affordable housing, than piecemeal development.

- 5.3 If the Steering Group want to prepare a Site Allocation plan then they will need to track the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan allocation would have to follow the adoption of the Local Plan. The Group can use the period up to the Autumn to start the evidence base. The Settlement Boundary in the Local Plan could be influenced by the group's response. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot allocate sites within the Greenbelt if the Local Plan does not.

**Action 1.1: Clerk to send Ms Witherden the Vision and aims**

5.4 The process of the SEA was questioned and this will need to wait until the Autumn but it is likely if the plan allocates any housing then it would need an SEA. However it is expected that Dorset Council would be willing to complete this.

5.5 Ms Witherden agreed to prepare a project plan for the next meeting.

This would identify work on certain evidence bases that can be started but it would likely include a household questionnaire, business questionnaire and community provider survey. The group will be able to access the Dorset Council call for sites information as soon as it is made available.

**Action 1.2: Ms Witherden to draw up a project plan for the group.**

## 6. Progress on Topic Areas

6.1 Deferred until a project plan has been drawn up.

## 7. Next Steps

7.1 See above

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm