

SHERSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STEERING GROUP

Notes of Meeting held on Tuesday 15th November 2016 Sherston Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Present:

John Matthews (JM), Mike Johnson (MJ), Sarah Wood (SW), John Knight (JK), Mr Harry Stevens (HS), Dr Pip Petit (PP), Graham Morris (GM), Nigel Freeth (NF), Judy Sharp (JS), Saara Sharman (SS), Poly Clements (PC), Phil Bowley (PB)

NP - Neighbourhood Plan

WC – Wiltshire Council

1. Apologies

Apologies were given from John Thomson, Rob Johnson, and Kevin Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Update

At the very beginning of the process of compiling the NP it was agreed that at the very least the plan should seek to provide a site for a new surgery. Various sites have been considered during this process but the only one that appeared to be likely to be deliverable is on Site 1.

At the last steering group in May therefore the group agreed to examine that possibility in greater detail. Site was also considered to be the preferred location to meet other village needs (e.g. as a site for the future expansion of the primary school and a possible site for a pre-school facility).

On advice from WC the Steering Group agreed in May to undertake a Viability Assessment of site 1 (the Sopworth Road site). This has now been completed.

The Group was advised that since May negotiations had been continuing between the land owners and WC regarding the Sopworth Road site. Those discussions had we were advised been focussed on considering how it might be possible to fund a new GP surgery out of the proceeds of the sale of the site at some future date should it be allocated for mixed use development in the NP (including some additional housing). Whilst not something that the NP could require as an outcome of the plan-making process it was nevertheless considered to be a potentially important objective to help meet the future needs of the community.

It was accepted from the outset that for this part of the plan to have a chance of being accepted by the community, given that it was likely to include the allocation of some part of the site for additional housing, assurance that a surgery will be deliverable in due course was essential. The ongoing negotiations between WC and the landowners were aimed at trying to agree how best to resolve this conundrum. More specifically those discussions have been aimed at trying to come up with a contractual arrangement that secures the delivery of a new GP surgery on the site should it be allocated for a mixed use development that proved viable.

This would most likely comprise a mixed development of affordable and market value houses together with the allocation of land for the future construction of the afore-mentioned GP surgery, primary school expansion and pre-school facility. The construction of the surgery, which would

have to be arranged via a deal between WC and the landowners, would form part of a land deal. Once built it would be leased to the practice. The surgery has confirmation from the NHS that it will be funded for 25 years.

By coincidence the WC Cabinet Capital Assets Committee held at WC earlier that day had considered a report on the Sopworth Lane site (site 1). This specifically dealt with possible arrangements between WC and the landowners regarding the release of land for and future construction of the potential new GP surgery. Although JT was not able to attend the Steering Group meeting he informed JM that it had been agreed that land would be set aside for a surgery should it be allocated in the emerging NP. JM was not sure whether this also included arrangements for the actual construction of the surgery and how would finance the build. Clarification would be sought on these matters – which would be reported back to the Group asap.

3.1 Sherston Development Appraisal

Seymour Chartered Surveyors have now completed the above-mentioned Viability Assessment on site 1 on behalf of the Steering Group. This site (North of Sopworth Lane) was specifically chosen for study as it was considered a suitable site for mixed use development and a new surgery. The land could also provide a site for a new pre-school and room for any school expansion.

Although the actual document was not available for public view at this point (at the suggestion of WC because it contained a significant amount of confidential/sensitive information), Seymour's had produced a basic summary of its findings which was circulated to the group and discussed by JK. Whilst multiple options for housing number and type were considered the final report was based on the following;

- 7.9 acre site North of the Primary School (current usage is arable farming)
- 45nr houses (including 27nr larger family houses and 18nr smaller affordable houses)
- Open market houses prices assessed by local agent
- Cotswold style houses
- Build costs include professional fees and contingency
- Utility service connections
- Improvements to Sopworth Lane
- Parking areas and landscaping
- Sustainable drainage systems
- Off-site sewerage connection
- Contribution to local education
- Site for GP surgery
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Purchase and sales costs
- Developer costs and margin

The report concluded that the project and development of the above should be financially viable. It The Group was advised that, following discussions with WC planners, it was now accepted that the actual construction of the new surgery would have to be funded through other means – it not being possible to require it's construction via the NP process. Similarly, it is also not possible (utilising WC policies) to seek funding towards improving off site sports facilities elsewhere in the village. However CIL (community Infrastructure Levy) payments could help with this aspect.

A copy of the 25 page document is now with WC for information and comments. The question was asked why the whole report was not available for the group to read, JK explained that WC have asked for it not to go into the public domain at this current time as they are still reviewing it and because it contains sensitive commercial information; it will however become available for all to view at a later stage.

Discussion then took place about the surgery and a member of the public asked why WC couldn't simply provide the site and also if there was any other way of providing a new surgery other than

building houses. MJ explained that, whilst it had now been confirmed that WC was willing to provide a site for the surgery, the information received from the GP's themselves confirmed that all other possible options had been explored by them and that effectively the only realistic option remaining was to secure funding via some sort of land deal.

PP explained as talked about in previous meetings that the NHS can't afford to provide community surgery's and are dependent on G.Ps funding themselves and the NHS in turn pay the doctors a rent for owning the building. The concern is that new doctors will not want to pick up financial burden of buildings and so won't come out to rural practices. Income stream of owning a practice is considerably less so private investors are not interested and the NHS will not fund construction of new practices unless there are exceptional circumstances in which Sherston isn't. That said, the NHS fully support the Surgery's plan on a new site/ building and would continue to pay rent to owners of the building for 25 years. If the building was owned by say WC once the debt was paid off it could be given back to the community. It has been estimated that the cost of the construction of the building would be in the region of 1.2 million; this doesn't include the land or refurbishing it internally.

Questions were asked about the house sizes and if small houses could be swapped for fewer but larger ones in order to achieve the same return for the village and if there was a 'plan b'.

Details regarding dwelling sizes considered are included in the report. A range of size options were investigated. The conclusions reached have been based on what is considered to be the best mix and show that the development should be viable based on that mix.

There is no Plan B as far as the GP surgery is concerned. Given the total lack of other funding options the likelihood is that all that could be achieved would be the allocation of a site for a new surgery with no certainty that it would ever be built.

3.2 The Vicarage Site Update

NF reported that the church found a restrictive covenant on the land which slowed down proceedings for a while, however this has now been resolved and progress is again being made.

4. Correspondence

Terence O'Rourke Ltd – Land North of Sandpits Lane (site 6)

The parish council received a letter for the attention of the NP Steering group from the above company acting on behalf of the sites landowners. They have asked if site 6 could be considered for development and included in the plan as they believe it is suitable, available and deliverable in terms of helping to meet village housing needs in a sensitive and high quality manner. The letter provided confirmation that that the site remains available for development and could provide a modest amount of housing for the local community while assisting in the delivery of community services. It was noted that Site 6 had been considered in the potential development sites study undertaken by Foxley Tagg on behalf of the steering group. Whilst it remained in the equation it was not considered to be the front runner. However it remained a possible alternative option if site 1 becomes undeliverable. JM and MJ have spoken to the company and updated them on the progress of the plan and current state of play.

5. Next Stage of Process and future actions

Firstly JM /MJ will talk to JT to clarify whether WC is able to secure delivery of the surgery. If this is confirmed then the following actions will follow;

1. Steering group meeting to update group and to agree on content of draft NP
2. Engage the community – Insert in the Cliffhanger, social media etc
3. Hold public meeting a soft consultation of the proposed plan

4. Compile draft plan (if feedback positive)
5. Plan goes to WC
6. Plan goes to Independent Inspector
7. Plan goes to a public referendum

MJ suggested possibly contacting Frank Hatt to help with the Cliffhanger insert to help make the content easier to understand (i.e. jargon free). Discussion then took place regarding the planning process and PB representing Green Square commented that until the NP is in place and adopted Sherston is in a vulnerable position in regard to developers.

6. AOB

A member of the public formally asked to be kept informed about the date of the next Steering Group meeting. SW agreed to do this.

To confirm date for next meeting –

Once all information has been received from JT and WC are meeting will be arranged, JM did warn all that it may be short notice due to the time scales.

Meeting finished at 9.05 pm. Notes taken by SW.