

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – STEERING GROUP MEETING
TUESDAY 29TH JULY 2015 @ 7.00PM**

There were approximately 12 members of the public present.

Attendants

- Penny Barry
- Joe Harvey
- Jill Houghton
- Joy Keeley
- Harry Knight
- George Longstaff
- Neil Pearce
- Charlotte Randell
- Elisabeth Uggerløse

The Chairman welcomed all and reminded them that this was not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been sent by Lee Pound and Guy Warner

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

G. Longstaff requested that the following be added at the end of the last question raised by the public: “Concern was raised that the single mention of 87% in the Draft Policy document was insufficient”.

Subject to the above, G. Longstaff proposed the Minutes be approved and signed.

3. PUBLIC FORUM – 15 MINUTES

- Why are you giving developers “carte blanche” when the Core Strategy has decided no more site allocation in Bidford are required?
The Chairman replied that this was not the case. The NDP sits within the Core Strategy and give the local community some control, especially regarding developments that are currently being submitted. The Core Strategy does not require us to take any further development, but it does not protect against current applications and appeals
- At the Parish Council meeting last Monday, Cllr Cargill mentioned a energy saving building system – could this not be included in the Environment Section of the document
Neil Pearce replied that it was difficult as this could not be imposed on builders. However, it could be possible to negotiate with them
- Why was the site on land to the west of Grafton Lane (13) proposed as mixed use as this was not the question raised in the survey

The Chairman appreciated the issue but advised that it was no longer relevant as no further sites were required unless for the purposes of safeguarding

- In the survey, the United Carriers Site (11) implied it was a proposed allocation for dwellings, not industrial or retail – why is it not being considered in the draft document despite receiving a 67% support
The Chairman replied that he could understand the support for this site as it has been an ugly bombsite for many years. However, a planning application for a retail unit had been submitted and was currently under consideration.
- The Comments were to have been made available – why were they not.
The intention was to make them available after the Steering Group had met to consider them. This had now been done and they would be available as soon as the Webmaster posted them online.

4. UPDATE ON SDC CORE STRATEGY

This had moved quickly and in the right direction. The Chairman then invited Neil Pearce, the Parish Council's Planning Consultant, to give a presentation of the current situation:

- Neil made clear that he was an independent advisor, commissioned by the Parish Council, to ensure the delivery of a sound NDP that would be passed by the inspector
- It had to be borne in mind that the draft policy consultation document came out before the Core Strategy amendments were put forward and approved by SDC.
- The Core Strategy is a very fluid document, changing all the time. And he stressed that the NDP had to conform both with SDC's Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – if it does not it will be considered unsound
- At the moment, SDC does not have an up to date plan in place so is reliant on the NPPF for its decision making on housing applications, which is in favour of supporting sustainable development.
- Once approved, the NDP will be a binding document and any planning decision must have full regard to it.
- Without an NDP, Bidford will remain vulnerable to speculative development..
- A NDP can be used to object to planning applications and defend appeals.
- It is a long term strategy – 16 years and it must be remembered that many things can change in this time.
- The Core Strategy recognises that the parish of Bidford-on-Avon has commitments of up to 450 dwellings, either built, in the process of being built or have planning permission. The number allocated under the Core Strategy was envisaged to be 275 and, as this number has been well surpassed, no further allocation is deemed to be required
- The 8 Main Rural Centres (MRC), of which Bidford is one, are expected to provide an additional 650 dwellings. 3 of the MRCs are constraint by Green Belt leaving only 5 to take these additional dwellings. Even taking this into consideration, Bidford would be in credit to the tune of 175 dwellings. Southam and Wellesbourne have similar levels of development to Bidford. Shipston-on-Stour and Kineton are the other 2 MRCs.

- The fact that the Core Strategy does not require further site allocations for Bidford is generally good news, but it is not the final position. The Planning Inspector has not approved it yet, and he may not agree with either the figure or the planned dispersal, in which case it would have to be reviewed once again. Having said this, Neil stated that he was much happier with this latest iteration of the Core Strategy.
- The question now is: does the NDP allocate a Strategic Reserve Site or not? Neil explained the purpose of a strategic reserve i.e that it relates to a site allocated for housing (or employment) which will only become available if and when a local need is identified, based on up to date housing needs evidence or similar.. This is not giving a green light to developers, it is simply allocating a site for specific reasons for potential future use. Neil stated that he had considered the positives and negatives of a Strategic Reserve Site, and there were more positives than negatives. The main negative is that it could be unpopular and could lead to no votes in the referendum.

On the other hand the positives are:

- It is good planning to have a contingency site that could come forward in the next 16 years
- It is better to include it in the NDP now, as it can always be removed at a later date prior to adoption. However, it cannot be re-added unless further and time consuming consultations took place.
- If the NDP does not include a Strategic Reserve site, there is the risk that SDC will impose one, and it may not be the most popular site
- The Marriage Hill Nursery site has a willing landowner and the developers have appealed the decision to refuse permission and there will be a full public enquiry at which the Parish Council will wish to strongly object. It would be easier for it to defend its stance if it had a Strategic Reserve site allocated as it could argue that if there is indeed a requirement for further development, there is already a site allocated for this, and it is not the one being appealed. No reserve site will make it harder to defend the objection, as Planning Inspectors are unlikely to place great weight on the view that “Bidford has had enough development” – so it is to protect the village against further speculative development
- Strategic Reserves are a recognised term and mechanism within the planning system.

The Chairman raised concerns about the Miller Homes site, as there is a further planning application for 200 homes submitted to SDC and he feared the Planning Officer would recommend granting permission and that the Planning Committee may pass it this time round.

He proposed that this become the Strategic Reserve Site, for a smaller number of dwellings as this could help the Planning Committee make a better decision

Neil Pearce advised that he was in the process of carrying out an assessment of all the 15 sites, following an established matrix, that would allow him to use a traffic light system of red, amber green: red being a negative and green a positive.

In view of this, and as this is a required process and important piece of the evidence base,, it was suggested that the group wait until this was completed before proposing a possible Strategic Reserve site.

Neil stated that whichever site was proposed it had to be defensible and it was up to the Steering Group to assess and compare popularity of each site with evidence about suitability.

To the concern raised that Bidford already has too much development and poor infrastructure, Neil replied that Planning Inspectors do not like the argument of “too much development” adding that the NPPF states that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

There then followed arguments comparing Bidford with other MRCs with better infrastructure which was halted by the Chairman as he did not believe it was relevant to Bidford’s NDP.

Neil was asked how many dwellings did he believe should be included in the Strategic Reserve to which he replied anything between 50 and 100 would represent a meaningful number

5. WORKING GROUPS ON AMENDS

The Chairman then invited members of the Steering Group to break up into their working groups and discuss any amendments to be made – 20 minutes were allocated.

After the allocated time, it was agreed that the working groups would email their amendments to Elisabeth no later than midday Friday. She would then forward these to Neil for him to amend the document which would be circulated over the weekend.

It was agreed there was no point in amending numbers, allocation sites etc. until Neil had carried out his site assessment, which would be circulated and considered at the next meeting.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 4th August @ 7.00 pm and the only items on the Agenda would be:

- Finalise amends by the Steering Group
- Next Steps

Meeting closed at approx. 8.15pm with thanks from the Chairman for the hard and purposeful work of the Steering Group.