

Meeting of Parish Council and NP Steering Committee
Held on 5th June 2023 11am on Microsoft Teams

Present

Suzanne Neave (SN) - chair
Giles Baxter (GB) – co-chair

Chris Neil (CN)
Christine McCulloch (CM)
Debbie Croft (DC)
Gerry Moscrop (GM)
Glenn Pereira (GP)
Jaqui Mason (JM)
Laura Buxton (LB)
Marc Juffkins (MJ)
Nick Fielding (NF)
Simon Russell (SR)

Apologies

James Hammond
Anne Davies

- 1) **Opening Remarks:** GB and GP expressed interest in coming to an agreement on working together going forwards.
- 2) **Agreed to record the meeting only for the purpose of producing the minutes and on condition it would not be distributed publicly.**

2) Declaration of Interests:

No declaration of interests made (aside from that people live in Clifton Hampden / Burcot)

SR raised as an issue that membership of Friends of Burcot and Clifton Hampden must be declared as a lobbying group. MJ, NF, CM, SN stated they did not consider it to be a lobbying group.

3) Confidentiality Undertakings: Everyone confirmed they have read and agreed to abide by the Model Councillor Code of Conduct principles.

4) Building Trust: Trust is imperative to this process. MJ raised two key points that needed to be considered: firstly, we need to recognise we have a divided community; secondly, a perceived lack of transparency. Transparency will be key to building trust with the community. Discussions on these points are needed.

5) Working relationships and reporting arrangements.

PC is responsible for NP in terms of being the qualifying body.

The following communication protocol was agreed:

- a. Communications with SODC and/or examiner will be directed via Anne Davies, PC Clerk. Councillors will work with Anne to determine onward distribution. All official communication, including the responses to questions/clarifications, to SODC/Examiner will be from the Parish Council via Anne Davies.

- b. Protocol for decisions to be made out of committee: Decisions can be made out of committee (for example via email) by the Councillors, if the majority agree, these decisions will then be ratified at next PC meetings.
- c. Where necessary, discussions between Councillors and SG may take place in working group sessions.

The following reporting arrangements were agreed:

GB to continue to take lead in reporting to the Parish Council, on behalf of SG.

GB will review ToR in light of SN joining etc.

5) Update on current NP situation

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6) Understanding of policies created

&

7) Opportunity to enhance NP to reflect the current climate

SN reflected there is a high level of confusion in the community about differences between the NP and NDO; this was evident by the number of responses in the consultation for the NP that were in fact related to the NDO, not the NP.

GB updated everyone on the history of the NP and that drafting an NP is a professional business. The NP is a policy document not a planning application.

GB explained that in the initial parish consultation there was broad support for the draft NP policies and there was, at the time, no perceived need to amend them.

Most policies were created by Neil Homer (consultant) and Suzie Coyne. As a result of comments received on the Regulation 14 consultation, including from residents and SODC. GB created new policies BCH 5 Protecting Community Facilities (to replace Asset of Community Value), BCH7 (Footpaths and Cycle paths), and Energy Efficient Buildings (BCH8) GB mentioned that nowadays there is a lot more help around policies on the internet, and that SODC pointed us in that direction.

GB explained that the bar for designating a Local Heritage Asset (BCH) 6 was extremely high, and that no buildings in the parish had been identified or suggested that warranted specifying in the policy.

As a professional body the SODC offered advice. One area of advice; because Clifton Hampden is in Greenbelt certain development policies, an NP cannot be used to promote development, such as allocation of sites. In the Green Belt these can only be determined and allocated through a separate process (NDO) or a community right to build order (CRtBO). As a consequence, draft policies on housing and policy on surgery were removed in the Reg 14 consultation

Most energy was devoted to NDO, and NP took a back seat until the two came together for Regulation 14 and 21 consultations

The PC started a discussion on the lack of recognition in the NP of significant threats all around the village and what a treasure our Parish is. NF stated that the NP seems to be designed to support the NDO, what happens if the NDO fails, are we left with a weak NP?

NF mentioned having shaping policies that might influence wider decisions. The SG mentioned the NP must conform with NPPF and Local Plan policies so we are limited in what we can do with regard to wider decisions. GB explained that the scope for the sort of interventions that NF was advocating is not there, we can only have policies for our own parish, we can have policies within our parish about “things” in our parish such as footpaths and veteran trees etc.. It is limited, we cannot say we do not want gravel extraction as this is a national or district policy. We have done all we can do in the NP to protect the parish. An example was the consultation on the designation of the NP area in 2014 which included the proposed quarry, to which the quarry company objected because they knew that the NP could shape the way the quarry was built. Having an NP in place allows the parish to comment critically on any future harms as we can reference our own policies.

There are lots of draft policies in place these days. SODC pointed us in the direction of new draft policies DCH 7 and 8 to cover Footpaths, Cycle Paths, Green Infrastructure and Landscape Character.

HIF1 was brought up– it destroys 167 trees, 3 miles of hedges (in our parish). The NP SG tried but could not conceptualise a policy to help here as HIF1 is determined by national and district policy. JM mentioned that Noise and lighting effects of the road are determined by national and district policy – it is hard as there is a conflict in national policies – any policies we create in the NP on these matters would not stand and we would be asked to take them out. JM explained how policies can be in conflict, e.g. lighting for road safety and protection of rural areas. She explained the Conservation officer has been working hard to minimise the impact of lighting.

PC brought up the issue of a lack of a Design Code in the NP – PC wondered why this is not in the NP. GB explained why there was no design code in our NP, which came down to lack of capacity and funding. There is a grant to create a Design Code if there is the energy – we can now also learn from existing NP from other parishes. SN said that this is something that should be considered.

GB said the NP SG did not have the resources to do more, would have loved to have done more but it was prioritisation of effort. The consultant Neil Homer contributed a lot of “standard” policies. GB mentioned GP and JM as the only other significant contributors to the development of NP policies. GB thinks a Design Code is a good idea but someone needs to put their hand up and do it. Even the process of applying for and managing a grant is time consuming and bureaucratic.

The PC suggested everyone wants the best in class for a NP – is there an opportunity with a broader group to do more.

GB says to do more we have 3 options:

1. Parish Council withdraws plan, adjusts plan and resubmits via Reg 14 and 21.
2. Examiner suggests changes and possibly we can suggest changes to the examiner – there is some scope for change.
3. Adopt plan as is and start a Revised NP in due course.

The PC emphasised that they did not want to go back to the drawing board.

The PC asked if there was scope for a PC letter to the inspector with suggestions of changes that might be incorporated into the existing plan. GB suggested the PC seek SODC’s advice.

CM would like policies around protecting the north bank of the river and downgrading the A415 as well as having robust environmental policies which might help (as per footpaths and mature trees re. gravel extraction above).

JM said there has been conversations with OCC about the A415 (something OCC had not considered). Protecting the north bank is more challenging – as you cannot write policies that go against national/district planning policies. JM suggests speaking to Ricardo Rios, maybe a design code could help in this regard as well.

There was a discussion about Infill in Burcot. GB explained there is a presumption about Infill in the Local Plan.

The PC suggests further conversations about the appetite for further improvements to the NP within the current process.

GB said he believed all those present would be supportive of seeking improvements, but need to be realistic about the effort involved. He believed the existing members of the Steering Group do not have the energy for further changes and the energy would have to come from NF and SN and whoever they bring to assist. This was backed up by GP asking if anyone of the other 7 members was able to work with the PC on Design Code but none volunteered. CM volunteered but GP said he was reluctant for any other member of the PC joining the SG. The PC is the overseeing body and needs to retain objectivity.

LB mentioned that SODC has their own Design Guide to help with the Design Codes. GB explained that SODC had requested (in their response to Reg 21) a paragraph inserted to refer to their own design guide. Detailed conservation area policies are in the SODC Local Plan. LB said there are existing policies out there, it's just if the PC want to create a more detailed/specific document.

It was agreed that we should look at the Long Wittenham and Culham Design Codes as a guide to what we could achieve.

SN has taken an action to consider possibilities regarding Design Codes to explore the opportunity, and if needed create a working group outside the steering group. Agreed by all.

AOB

JM asked if there are any changes to the plan that the Steering Group be kept informed. SN agreed.

DC has asked if all concerns raised by the PC have been addressed, GB also asked whether the PC members had any concerns that they have not made in their individual submissions (Regulation 21 consultation) SN confirmed for now queries had been answered, but others may arise; any further concerns raised can be dealt with through the process.

CM talked about why the Barley Mow is in the NP.

CN explained that the Barley Mow is part of the “village” but not part of the parish. GB said if CM has made this point in the Reg 21 submission, then the examiner will deal with it.

NF mentioned George Gilbert Scott is mentioned in our NP and it useful to be aware of his history regarding slave-ownership, this needs a review. GB asked if NF had mentioned this in his submission. NF said he had not but was taking the opportunity now. GB made an

observation that in preparing the description of Burcot in the NP, there was a complete absence of any comments on this section in responses from Burcot Residents, aside from a name correction.

GB stated he saw no reasons why, should the opportunity arise during the examination process, to correct these things.

DOMN

GB mentioned that until the Examiner comes back with questions there is no need for the Steering Group to meet. Parish Council will notify GB when NP examination commences.