

SELECTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 28TH FEBRUARY 2019

Notes of a meeting of the appointed councillors to the Selective Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

Present:

Cllrs. Jean Curteis and Kate Walder, non-council members: Jim Boot, Richard Masefield, Siggie Nepp, Sue Quinton and Graham Smith. Lesley Owers was also present.

1. Welcome and introductions

Siggie Nepp was welcomed as the latest member to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee remains “unofficial” as Ashford Borough Council (“ABC”) are yet to issue the Neighbourhood Area designation required for the Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that Simon Cole had yet to supply his letter of advice relating to the existing draft SPD.

2. The Road Map

Jim Boot (“JB”), originally supplied a Road Map, along with his submission to TTC of his fee proposal. Working from this Road Map, we are currently running approximately 3-4 months behind schedule but JB pointed out that this time has been productively and usefully used. For example, by designating the Neighbourhood Plan area as the whole of the parish from the outset, a large amount of complexity has been removed. Interested parties and potential stakeholders have been apprised of the existence of the Neighbourhood Plan during this period. JB supplied a very useful and concise glossary of terms and the Locality Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide also had a useful glossary and definitions section, along with the NPPF 2018. JB advised that the Steering Committee kept an eye on the Neighbourhood Plan page on the ABC website for responses to the Neighbourhood Plan area designation.

3. Who or what qualifies as a “stakeholder”?

There was a discussion on what constituted a “stakeholder” for neighbourhood planning purposes and JB stated that a stakeholder was simply a person or body who held a “stake” in the area and how best to engage with them. Given the wideness of this definition, stakeholders would not simply be landowners - other relevant stakeholders in Tenterden could include Ivy Court Surgery, the Steam Railway, the Churches, the Schools Trust etc. and it was important not to focus purely on land ownership as the qualification for stakeholder status. In terms of engaging with stakeholders and asking them to engage with the process, JB suggested a press notice and invitation on TTC’s website as a suitable means of beginning discussions with a Stakeholders Event. As the Steering Committee would not be designating development sites, the issue of whether discussions should be held with developers could be considered further down the line. But existing developers owning land in Tenterden that fell within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary should be consulted. It was later made clear that Stakeholders could not sit on the Steering Committee.

4. Locality, their role in grant-giving and as a source of Technical Support

Although help to obtain the Locality Grant of approximately £9,000 had been offered by a qualified and experienced resident, JB stated that it was a fairly straightforward but slightly fiddly process. Locality’s grants are not competitive and the correct body to apply is TTC and the Town Clerk. JB suggested that he would give phone assistance to work through the necessary application. Other grants which may be applied for as a result of the Neighbourhood Planning process could benefit

from the assistance of the suitably-qualified and experienced resident e.g. Sussex Lund Grants to enhance and improve those areas qualifying for NP protection.

Locality's provision of Technical Support packages was described by JB. This work is predominantly carried out on behalf of the government by a large consultancy AECOM (although it is important to remember that the Steering Committee is the client and the consultancy is the provider. Technical Support packages can be provided or specifically commissioned and these are free. JB pointed out the essential ones to focus on would be the Strategic Environmental Assessment; the Habitats Regulations Assessment and the Design Assessment package as this final package contains details of Landscape Character including design which would be an important element of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. Finally the Neighbourhood Plan Health Check supplied by Locality would be very important as this would assess whether it was "fit for purpose" before submission to ABC.

5. Designation of the Recreation Ground and St. Michael's Recreation Ground as protected spaces under the Neighbourhood Plan

JB advised that these two spaces should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure full, "belt and braces" protection to them. Residents would assume that they were included and most Neighbourhood Plans did include parks in this manner despite existing designation as "open spaces" in the Local Plan. Any policies drafted in relation to these would have to feature building for specified purposes e.g. new sports or pavilion building so as not to prevent appropriate future use.

6. Pre-launch and Launch Events

JB advised that the Steering Committee and appropriate working groups or sub-committees should be established and up and running between March - May 2019, with field visits to sites taking place by April 2019. Each sub-committee would have responsibility for writing a section of the Neighbourhood Plan in order to spread the workload. JB will prepare work programmes and be present at the initial meetings of the sub-committees in order to facilitate the smooth running of this process. Primary consultation and community engagement could begin in earnest in May/July 2019. JB pointed out the importance of prioritising and scheduling regular meetings with the relevant planning officers at ABC. Suitable launch dates and venues were discussed at length with acknowledgment made of the need to ensure that the entire parish was kept informed and engaged - it was suggested that the main launch event would also include "satellite" meetings for St. Michael's and Smallhythe for example. This geographical spread across the parish was re-emphasised with regard to future membership of the Steering Committee and sub-committees, along with the need for a spread of relevant skill-sets and interests. It was also acknowledged that given the residents' support of the Neighbourhood Plan, that numbers at the launch meetings could well be high and bigger venues such as the Leisure Centre and Homewood should be approached for availability and cost. A launch date in the week of 23 April was proposed as people would have returned from Easter breaks. It was also suggested that these events be filmed and made available to residents who were not able to attend on TTC's social media presence. A launch event should also take place in the evening and weekend to ensure maximum participation. A 'pre-launch' event should precede the official launch to staff the Steering Committee to identify those who were prepared to work actively on the Neighbourhood Plan. The evening of Wednesday 3rd April was proposed for the 'pre-launch' event to be held here at TTC. JB is to circulate a suitable joining form that could be used and the current Steering Committee are to liaise by email to identify suitable dates for this pre-launch event. JB is to supply summaries of the work each officer's role will entail e.g. Secretary, Treasurer, Chair of the Steering Committee. JB emphasised the importance of the Secretary's role as the co-ordinator of the various groups and the person who kept the process moving.

7. Terms of Reference and Timescale for Appointing Officers

The scope of this document and its suitability were noted - JB stated that it was drawn in terms that were not too prescriptive and gave the necessary room for flexibility. It is to go to TTC's Planning Committee in April 2019 for approval as ABC's advice would have to be considered and any insights from the pre-launch events. JB is to supply summaries of the work each officer's role will entail e.g. Secretary, Treasurer, Chair of the Steering Committee. JB emphasised the importance of the Secretary's role as the co-ordinator of the various groups and the person who kept the process moving. A Communications Officer would also be needed.

8. Liaison with other groups

The Community Land Trust, TDRA, the SPD sub-committee, the Schools Trust, the Recreation Ground sub-committee, Kent Wildlife Trust, the Weald of Kent Protection Society were mentioned.

9. "Robust" Evidence suitable for the sub-committees to work from

JB pointed to the supplementary Planning Policy Guidance notes issued under the NPPG, specifically guidance on ancient and veteran trees and local green space. Any evidence published by ABC in its formulation of the Local Plan and otherwise would be vital. In addition, JB stated that mapping had taken place of the entire AONB and he would supply a link to this information as it would be very important in assessing landscape character and Tenterden's inter-relationship with the AONB and its setting.