

## **Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Community Workshop 2 March 2019**

### **Minutes**

#### **Steering Group Attendees:**

Sarah Eccles (SE), Fred Cabbage (FC), David Hignell (DH), Mike Jenkins (MJ), Rita Atkinson (RA), Clare Pennicott (CP), Peter Morris (PM) and Joanna O'Callaghan (JOC)

Members of public: 35 initially but exceeding 50 by the end.

JOC (chair of SG) introduced event, thanked everyone for attending and welcomed their input. The makeup of the SG was explained and the need for input by experts like Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) to assist in producing a NP, a legal document. JOC welcomed Tom McCulloch (TMcC) of CFO.

#### **Introduction by JOC:**

JOC ran through a brief resume of development in SC from the late 1950s to date. It was felt that virtual saturation point had been reached and for this reason the SG were not planning on allocating sites for development in the draft plan. JOC confirmed that this objective was endorsed by residents in responses to the questionnaire. Notwithstanding this JOC stated that SC was located in a precarious position with many potential challenges such as Didcot Garden Town (DGT), Milton Park and the power station site. Other additional pressures included a new Thames crossing, Oxford/Cambridge expressway and Oxfordshire's deal with the Government to provide an additional 100,000 homes.

JOC summarised by stating that the SG will work towards a draft plan which preserves and enhances SC, retaining green spaces and ensures that SC retains its own identity. JOC referred to 2 village appraisals which have been commissioned, covering village character and village landscape which should support these objectives. Both documents will appear on NP page of the PC website. Finally, JOC concluded that SC needed a NP now more than ever before and that the SG hope to make great strides in 2019 towards making one, hence this afternoon's workshop. JOC handed over to Tom.

JOC confirmed minutes would be taken when asked by a member of the audience.

#### **Introduction by TMcC:**

TMcC provided 4 handouts: Questionnaire results, SG's draft aims and objectives, general precis of NPs and feedback form.

TMcC stated he was joint CEO of CFO, a community development charity which aims to help communities to help themselves. He runs the NP consultation and has been involved with 22 NPs including East Hanney, East Hagbourne and Long Wittenham. He aimed to present the results of the questionnaire, to present emerging aims/visions/objectives, provide a brief outline next steps and then move onto a floor discussion.

#### **TMcC, overview of NP:**

This covered: NP is a statutory document relating to land use. The contents of the plan must be underpinned by the community with consultations at a number of stages thereby reflecting village priorities and be finalised by a referendum. It must conform to The Vale's Local Plan (LP). A NP can provide more protection against development and the risk of further development can be reduced by the use of appraisals such as landscape and village character.

TMcC provided examples of possible relevant policies for a SCNP considering Questionnaire responses and draft visions, aims and objectives:

Policy that can protect existing green spaces and create new ones but must be careful not to be over protective like Wantage.

Policy that set out the design of any new development

Policy that can protect and enhance environment and bio diversity

Policy that can protect important buildings and the character of the village

TMcC covered how non land use and non- planning matters could also be covered by our NP.

Examples of non -planning matters include speeding and footpaths. CFO's approach to such issues is to include them in an annexe to the NP. TMcC was aware that, like other villages, these issues were very important to SC residents.

### **TMcC – Where is SC on the NP journey?**

Still early in the NP process but progress made as Community Consultation Questionnaire was carried out in 2018 and draft aims/visions/objectives have been drawn up by SG.

TMcC ran through topline results:

663 responses altogether.

Highlights include the importance of development only within footprint (i.e. infill), importance of green spaces and views, the need to enhance the natural environment, the need for additional facilities and need for improving infrastructure and traffic management. TMcC referred to Burford and their recent gain of banning HGV's through town.

TMcC referred to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and described it as a tax that developers have to pay on every house that is built. 25% of the levy will go direct to the parish with a NP in place, as opposed to 10% (\* see footnote) without a NP. The NP will state how and where to spend CIL should it be forthcoming. This was covered by the questionnaire; footpath enhancement and village hall improvements were popular choices. A member of the public questioned the use of CIL on infrastructure such as footpaths as highways, including footpaths, were down to the County Council and surely covered by council tax. TMcC made it clear that the 25% would be paid direct to the PC and go towards the projects identified in the NP.

Member of public raised CIL particularly in relation to proposed Redrow development. TMcC confirmed that the site was in the LP and must therefore be in NP as the NP cannot conflict with the LP. It was pointed out that should the 'Redrow' site be developed before the SCNP was in place the village would not benefit from the additional levy.

### **TMcC on next steps:**

Residents comments on the SG's visions and objectives will go towards formulating draft policies. The precise wording of policies is very important and must be backed up with evidence from both the community and appraisals such a the 2 commissioned. Draft policies will be put back to the community for comment. Once agreed the policies will be incorporated into a draft plan.

## **Public participation and questions:**

### **There were a number of questions from the floor including the following:**

Question: Concerning potential additional housing development and financial gain?

Response: It was stated that it is clear from questionnaire responses that any further homes should be sited on infill rather than green field sites. However, no one can prevent an application for green field development. Should an application be approved the parish would gain 25% CIL with a NP but only 10% (\*see footnote below) if a plan is not adopted.

Question: Concerning the agreed designated area of SCNP?

Response: The area was outlined making it clear that unfortunately it didn't include Milton Park/ Power Station site to the south but did cover 2 fields between SC and Milton. MJ stated it had taken over 18 months to negotiate and agree the designated area as the SG was pressing the Vale to include all the parish.

Question: How can the NP cover traffic particularly HGVs? Resident felt a survey was required.

Response: TMcC referred again to Burford and the inclusion of the point in an annexe to the NP. TMcC agreed that a survey would be a good idea as it would provide evidence of the problem.

Question: Concerning the questionnaire, in particular the number of responses received. How could 660 responses be taken as a fair representation of villagers' views and surely with such a low rate of return the validity of the survey should be questioned.

Response: It was stated that the return rate in SC was comparable with and better than other villages. TMcC stated that a response rate of circa 20% was good. He stressed that the examiner, when looking at community involvement in the plan preparation, takes into account all aspects, such as community workshops as well as the survey results. TMcC said that he is aware of a very small village that had a response rate of circa 75% but no examiner would expect that from a large village. The examiner would consider what is reasonable. Furthermore, it was stressed that public community events were just as important.

Question: Geographically, are there responses from all parts of the village?

Response: It was confirmed that responses were received from residents living in all parts of the village but some parts had a higher response rate but felt that that would be expected. Furthermore, it was stated everyone was encouraged to respond and everyone was given the same chance to complete a questionnaire either on paper or on-line.

Question: Concerning timescale and an indication of the cost of producing a NP and whether the financial rewards for having a NP would cover the initial outlay.

Response: It was stated that a grant of £10,000 had been received and that the SG will be applying for further grants. Because of the complexity of issues in our village, particularly with regard to its position, it is likely that an additional grant of £8,000 to cover technical expertise should be forthcoming. Grants to cover a traffic survey may also be available. It was stressed that the grants had to be spent on the plan and nothing else. TMcC said that average cost of plan preparation was £17,000 to £20,000. MJ said that the return on having a NP from CIL will be far greater than the cost of the plan.

Question: SC has already had a large amount of development surely development should be fairly distributed.

Response: The NP for SC will not allocate development sites for this reason.

Question: Concerning OCC's deal with the Government to provide an additional 100,000 homes.

Response: It was stated that a NP can influence all those speculative developers that come along. The Vale has to take note of a NP when considering those applications. It is important that the village is pro active and produce a NP.

Question: Concerning facilities such as schools and medical facilities. Are they embraced in a NP?

Response: It was stated that OCC has recently paid for 2 new classrooms. The NP can include a policy relating to facilities but must be supported by evidence.

TMcM concluded questions, thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to now consider the SCNP visions, aims and objectives and complete the feedback form.

\*Footnote: Although 10% was what was stated at the meeting, the correct figure is 15%