

Minutes of Stonehouse Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group held on 17 November 2016

Present: Jo Byrne (JB), Carol Kambites (CK), Rachel Russell (RR-Minutes), Clare Sheridan (CS- Chair), Terry Webb (TW)

1. Apologies: Alastair Shankland (AS)

2. Declarations of interest: None

3. Accuracy of the minutes and Actions:

The minutes of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Working Group of 3 November 2016 were approved.

Outstanding actions and actions not within agenda:

ACTION: RR to prepare folders on the Google drive so Town Councillors have access to range of information regarding submission draft or to direct Town Councillors to website where appropriate.

ACTION: RR to advise Regeneration and Environment Committee that Neighbourhood Plan pages of Town Council website need to remain for life of Plan.

4. Project Progress

a) **Budget and finance**

RR reported that invoices had been received from J Slater for Health Check and GRCC for consultancy support meaning that all invoices relating to the current Locality Grant have been received. The budget and finance information is the same as that provided at the previous meeting on 3 Nov and attached as an appendix to the minutes of 3 Nov 2016.

Gill Jennings, Town Clerk, had confirmed that it would be acceptable to use some of the £1,500 budget for Neighbourhood Plan Consultancy support on re-design costs if necessary.

b) **Project timetable**

RR reported that information on the results of the consultation on the draft Plan is now on website, including the response table prepared by CK.

Further work to the submission draft is needed to take account of advice from the Health Check. Neither the consultation statement or conditions statement is ready.

DECISION: Submission draft of Neighbourhood Plan and all supporting documents to be circulated on 16th January with papers for Town Council meeting of 23rd January 2017.

21 Nov	Neighbourhood Plan update report to be circulated for Town Council meeting 28 Nov
28 Nov	Submission draft to be ready for circulation with SNPG agenda for meeting of 1 Dec
1 Dec	Consultation Statement to be completed
15 Dec	Conditions Statement to be underway

6. Pre Submission draft

a) **Health check comments** from John Slater were considered. SNPG responses to health check comments on policies are recorded in the table attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

DECISION: Submission draft to be amended in line with agreed SNPG responses to health check comments, including the editing of the Priority Projects chapter to include general projects as well as those to be prioritised for CIL/s 106 funding.

ACTION: RR to send CK extract from collated consultation on draft Plan responses table showing all responses to be referred to Town Council.

b) **Actions and timetable for production of submission draft:**

ACTION: Sections to be edited by 28th November as follows: Amenities (TW), Transport and Priority Projects (CK), Housing (RR), Employment (AS), Environment (CS); resulting Submission Draft to be considered at SNPG meeting of 1 December.

John Slater's comment that the SEA screening opinion must be signed off by a District Council Officer with the correct authority was noted. Ricardo Rios advised that he would ensure a SEA/HRA determination would be issued as he had only issued an opinion.

ACTION: RR to contact GRCC to ask for examples of NP policies from made Plans covering similar topics to Stonehouse draft NDP policies H4: Accessible Housing, ENV1: Maintaining and protecting the natural environment and ENV4: Protecting the heritage assets of Stonehouse.

ACTION: RR to chase Stroud District Council to ensure that an SEA/HRA determination is issued.

7. Supporting documents for submission to District Council with Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement

RR is working on Consultation draft and provided copies of work done to date at meeting.

ACTION: RR to provide full draft of Consultation Statement for SNPG meeting of 1 December

Conditions Statement

RR reported that she had contacted S Todd for a quote for preparing all or parts of the Conditions Statement. He was not available until January 2017.

ACTION: RR to seek quote from S Todd for preparing Conditions Statement in January 2017.

Town Character Assessment (see below).

8. Character Assessment

Town Centre and Retail	Done.
East of Town Centre	Summary done; ACTION RR: photos insertion underway.
Canal Zone	Done
West of Town Centre	Summary done; ACTION RR: photos to be inserted.
Doverow Hill	Summary done; ACTION CS: Photos to be inserted. ACTION: RR to put Doverow photos from Drive on memory stick for CS.
Industrial Zone	Done

9. Any Other Business

None to report.

10. Next meeting dates

Thursday 1 December 2016- agree submission draft and Consultation Statement.

Amenities and Facilities

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
<p>Policy AF1: Protecting Community Facilities</p>	<p>The way that the policy is written it appears that there are two tiers of community amenities and facilities to be protected. The first part of the policy protects all existing facilities and it then goes on to refer to specific sites as “particularly locally valued community amenities and facilities”. Does the fact that other amenities are not cited mean that the level of protection is less than those quoted? Is there a benefit from actually identifying some facilities and not others, when you are looking to protect all community facilities? My concern is that as written, would a decision maker or an applicant have clarity as to whether their facility is protected and to what extent?</p> <p>The caveat refers to two local plan policies – Policy EI6 refers to loss of facilities within buildings (some of which could change their use under permitted development powers without requiring planning permission) and others which deal with open space. It may be better if the policy was split up so it is clear that Policy EI6 covers i) –iii) and Policy ES 13</p>	<p>The first and second sentence will be linked with the word “including” or similar to show protection is intended for all community facilities.</p> <p>Policy already states that Local Plan policies will apply where appropriate.</p> <p>Justification text may be altered to take account of point re loss of shops.</p> <p>Add all facilities referred to in policy to Map.</p>

	<p>covers iv) – viii), so the tests are clear. An additional point is that Policy EI6 deals with the loss of individual shops. It would be useful clarification if the plan policy or text made clear that the loss of individual shops would not be considered a loss of a community facility. Question – would the loss of school playing field to put in school buildings result in the loss or enhancement to a community facility?</p>	
<p>Policy AF2: Additional Community facilities</p>	<p>The policy seems to be written on the basis that additional facilities will only be provided by the erection of new buildings. However new facilities could be created by the change of use of buildings, in which case the requirement to satisfy criteria ii) biodiversity etc. and surface water run off would not be applicable to a change of use. This can be easily remedied by the insertion of the caveat of "where appropriate".</p>	
<p>Policy AF3: Design and Quality in the Town Centre</p>	<p>One of the requirements of Secretary of State policy guidance is that policies should be clear and be capable of being used by a decision maker with confidence. My concern is whether it is possible for an applicant or decision maker to be</p>	<p>To be merged with EM4. Add point (iv) and final sentence on vacant floors above ground floor from EM4:</p>

	<p>clear as to whether a property will affect the appearance of the “gateway” to the town centre. Is it possible to define on a plan, the areas which affect the appearance of these gateways? The other point is the policy covers the public realm and whilst some development will affect the quality of streets and civic spaces, such as outdoor catering, much of these works affecting the pedestrian experience, fall outside planning control, being covered by highway legislation. These areas, such as hanging baskets and planting in the highway, may be better included as Community Aspirations. The final statement in the policy welcoming the diversity of retail provision is superfluous. Planning control cannot differentiate between a butcher shop, a green grocer or a charity shop. Is the reference to diversity of retail provision relating to Use Class A1 shops or to other retail uses found in Use Class A2-5 in which case it may lead to a conflict with Local Plan Policy E17? For clarity would it not be better to import the % figure into the Neighbourhood plan policy?</p>	<p>“Policy EM4: Town centre uses</p> <p>Development proposals including change of use (where planning permission is required) within the defined primary shopping frontage area will be supported where they meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy EI17.</p> <p>Throughout the defined town centre area, proposals for change of use from A1 to A2 - A5 (where planning permission is required) will be supported where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) maintain, and where feasible, enhance the street frontage, built character and street scene within its setting; and, ii) enhance the town centre’s vitality, viability and diversity of its offer and the overall shopping character is not undermined; iii) contribute positively to the town centre as the focus of commercial and community life of the town; and, iv) there is no significant adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic generation, noise and light pollution.
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		<p>Proposals which meet the above criteria and bring back into use vacant floors above the ground floor will be particularly welcomed.”</p> <p>Add retail Gateways to Map.</p>
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Transport

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
Policy T1: Pedestrian Routes	<p>Again the improvements to pedestrian routes if they are public highways would not need planning permission. It may be better if the second element dealing with improvements to existing routes were to be covered by Community Aspirations, geared towards persuading the Highway Authority to adopt a particular approach or practice, rather than being aimed at developers and applicants. However, if the routes are incorporated into the development proposal, then it is a matter that is legitimately covered by a neighbourhood plan policy. I fully appreciate the desire to use these routes as wildlife corridors, but there will be instances e.g. when the route goes through a gap between two buildings, where it would not be appropriate or practical for that to be considered as part of a wildlife corridor. This point can be accommodated by inserting "where possible".</p>	<p>Will consider re-wording and possible movement of some policy text to Aspirations/Projects section as suggested.</p>

Policy T2: Cotswold Way Loop	This is not a policy that relates to the use and development of land and my recommendation is that it should be deleted as a development plan policy and put into the Community Aspirations section. It is a proposal relating to the waymarking of a long distance route and is a matter for the Highway Authority or Natural England.	Will consider possible movement of policy text to Aspirations/Projects section as suggested.
Policy T3: New development and pedestrian links to the town centre	The fact that the policy places a requirement to provide safe and convenient crossings of roads and railways may put an obligation on a developer that he is not in a position to be able to deliver because the land, or rights to do the works, may not be under his/her control. As such the requirement is unreasonable and a more nuanced approach is required, such as to encourage the provision of such routes, where possible and deliverable. The introductory statement "In line with local plan policy EI12" is unnecessary, as the policy is appropriate in its own right and the existence of a local plan policy is not in itself a justification for a neighbourhood plan policy.	Will consider re-wording as suggested.

Policy T4: Design of off road pedestrian and cycle routes	This policy can only apply to new and improved routes that are provided or incorporated within development proposals for which planning permission is required. In which case this qualification could be helpfully be added to the policy and the elements of the policy covering rights of way, cycle and pedestrian routes not affected by development, should go into the Community Aspiration section of the plan.	Will consider re-wording and possible movement of some policy text to Aspirations/Projects section as suggested.
Policy T5: Proximity of new development to facilities and services	No comments.	
Policy T6: Existing cycle routes	The first paragraph would be better put into Community Aspirations as it relates to existing highway infrastructure but the second paragraph is fine.	Will consider possible movement of policy text to Aspirations/Projects section as suggested.

Policy T7: New development and cycle links to the town centre	The points regarding the unacceptability of imposing a requirement to deal with matters which are outside a developer's control, as raised in relation to Policy T3 equally applies to cycle routes. Whilst a desirable outcome, it cannot be made a policy requirement if the developer does control the land or has certainty of delivery. It could prevent the delivery of strategic housing sites, if left as proposed. The designation of routes as cycle ways is a highway rather than a planning authority matter and should go into Community Aspirations.	Will consider possible movement of some policy text to Aspirations/Projects section as suggested.
Policy T8: Cycle Parking	Whilst the actual removal of cycle parking is not itself development, it is a relevant requirement for a development that results in the loss of cycle parking, to replace it, if it is shown that there is a need for it.	No re-wording required?
Policy T9: Improving key pedestrian and cycle links	This is a supportive policy rather than a policy requiring something and so I have no comments	
Policy T10: Railway stations	As the policy only relates to Burdett Road Railway Station, the title should be expressed in the singular.	Accept title change or devise alternative e.g. "railway facilities and/or development"

Policy T11: Loss of Parking Capacity	How would a proposal that came forward which replaced the parking be viewed?	
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Housing

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
Policy H1: Local needs housing (dwelling size and type)	As this is a supportive policy rather than one that places a stipulation that applicants need to meet, means that the thresholds at examination are lower. The neighbourhood plan may wish to signpost applicants, to the actual source of evidence, where they may find out what Stonehouse's local housing needs, demand and demographic profile is.	Add further references to justification text re local housing need, demand and demographic profile.
Policy H2: Local needs housing in Stonehouse	<p>The first part of the neighbourhood policy is a requirement to comply with the relevant Local Plan. That is an unnecessary policy requirement. Furthermore,</p> <p>I do not believe that the actual Local Plan Policy CP9 is now in line with the latest Secretary of State guidance following the Court of Appeal's judgement in the case of the Secretary of State v West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council, dated 13th May 2016. The Secretary of State's guidance is that pooled financial</p>	Combine H2 with H1 and the supporting text.

	<p>contributions and affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less or which have a maximum combined floorspace of no more than 1000sq.m. In terms of the second element, I consider that this requirement is unreasonable as affordable housing is normally promoted in conjunction with a local housing association whose remit will be to provide for those in housing need and I do not think that it is necessary or appropriate for an applicant for affordable housing to have to justify the particular mix of housing that it's proposal is promoting as part of a planning application. I recommend that the policy be deleted.</p>	
<p>Policy H3: Ease of access in new residential development</p>	<p>The wording of the policy includes a requirement to provide clear access, for example, for refuse vehicles. There may be situation such as infill development within an existing street, where refuse vehicles service the properties from the street and it would be unreasonable to expect anything different for the new houses. The policy can meet its objective, whilst allowing for some flexibility to react to individual situations, by the use of "should" rather than "will".</p>	<p>Change wording as suggested.</p>

<p>Policy H4: Accessible housing</p>	<p>The Secretary of State’s Written Ministerial Statement, presented to the House of Commons on 25th March 2015, pointed to the new additional Building Regulations dealing with water, access and a new national space standard. It does allow “In cases of very specific and clearly evidenced housing accessibility needs, where individual household requirements are clearly outside the new national technical standards, LPAs may ask for specific requirements outside the access standard, subject to overall viability considerations”. Planning policies has to be based on evidence and the justification for this policy in this case</p> <p>is “to ensure the provision of sufficient housing to meet the needs of the population of Stonehouse” There has been no evidence of what the particular</p> <p>needs Stonehouse has for access provisions beyond that provided by compliance with the building regulations and that imposing that requirement on 10% of new dwellings on major schemes, would meet evidenced need. Furthermore, no evidence has been submitted as to what the effect of that requirement would have on development viability. I do not consider that the case for</p>	<p>Seek examples from GRCC of policies with similar intent from made NPs.</p>
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	<p>this provision has been met and accordingly I recommend that this policy be deleted from the plan. The policy also lacks precision as it does not define what is meant by fully accessible to all.</p>	
<p>Policy H5: Play area in new residential development</p>	<p>Firstly, this policy merely requires compliance with local plan policy but it looks to encourage on site provision of the required amount of play space. The difficulty with that is that the requirement for on-site play areas depends on the size and type of unit. The need for a children's play area for 11 one bed flats, which would not be family housing, would be different to a development of 11 three bed houses. Similarly, the Local Plan policy recognises that on site provision may not always be practical. As a counterpoint, the neighbourhood plan states that on site provision is to be welcomed, rather than required.</p>	

Employment

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
<p>Policy EM1: Safeguarding Local Employment Sites (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8)</p> <p>I have no comments on this policy.</p>	<p>The policy needs to consider whether there needs to be an "or" inserted after criterion ii).</p> <p>The requirement vi) to have to propose incubator units for "small a(sic) micro start-up businesses and comply with Policy EM2" seems to be an unreasonable and unrealistic requirement, if say a change of use was proposed for a unit to "complementary ancillary uses" such as a sandwich bar serving the industrial estate. Maybe that requirement should relate to development of land for new units rather than on changes of use. I am not sure that the requirements in the last criteria vii) is appropriate as Local Plan Policy EI3 is a policy that deals with small employment sites, outside designated sites. This neighbourhood plan policy deals with designated sites. Secondly Policy EI4 deals with existing employment sites in the</p>	<p>Consider re-wording as suggested.</p>

	countryside. Without a site visit it is not possible for me to determine whether any of the 5 sites covered by the policy, could be described as being in the countryside.	
Policy EM2: Resisting loss of employment space outside designated employment sites	I have no comments on this policy.	
Policy EM3: Supporting small and medium sized business	This is a supportive policy and I have no objections. However, it should be recognised that planning control cannot restrict occupation to start-up and SME companies as, generally, planning control deals with the land use rather than the occupiers. Technically, a multinational could rent a small office or business unit in the town without triggering a change of use.	
Policy EM4: Town Centre uses	There is a need to closely examine this policy in the context of Policy AF3, as they both deal with the change of use of shops within the town centre. Which policy would a person wishing to change the use have to comply with. There is a typographical error, I	This policy to be removed; some text used in AF3.

	<p>believe the relevant local plan policy is EI7 not EI17.</p> <p>As the percentage limit is critical to the acceptability of a change of use, it is misleading that the policy, which appears so supportive for appropriate town centre uses, also contains a strong constraint in terms of the concentration of non-A1 in the area. It would be more helpful if that criterion is incorporated into the neighbourhood plan policy, rather than being signposted to another document.</p>	
Policy EM5: Connectivity and infrastructure	I have no comments on the content of the policy, but you may wish to retitle it to "communication infrastructure" as the word infrastructure without qualification has wider connotations such as drainage, roads etc	Consider rewording title as suggested.

Environment

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
Policy ENV1: Maintaining and protecting the natural environment	<p>I find this policy vague and imprecise. A decision maker would need to know what are the characteristics and essential qualities of the natural environment of the Plan area. I would refer you to Paragraph 117 of the NPPF which states that planning policies should identify and map the local ecological networks including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of local importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them. It goes on to talk about promoting the preservation and recreation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. The national advice is that the level of protection should be linked to the level of harm and the significance of the designation. (Para 113 of the NPPF). As proposed the threshold for considering an application is that there is no adverse impact on any of the "characteristics". As written I do not think the policy would pass the basic conditions test. There are good examples of neighbourhood plan policies that have a</p>	<p>Seek examples from GRCC of policies with similar intent from made NPs.</p>

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
	more targeted approach to the protection of the natural environment, which follows the national advice.	
Policy ENV2: Green infrastructure network	<p>You may wish to consider retitling the policy as "Green and Blue Infrastructure Network". I am not sure that it is so much a policy as statement, all I can see is that it requires the decision maker to consider the network "as a whole when it is likely to be affected by development". Is the intention to not allow any development which will have an adverse impact on the value and integrity of the network, as a whole? In which case that is the approach the policy drafting should take.</p>	<p>Final sentence of policy to read:</p> <p><i>"Not all the components of the network have statutory protection; however, development proposals which maintain and enhance this locally valued network will be supported."</i></p>
Policy ENV3: Local Green Space	<p>It is entirely within the gift of the neighbourhood plan to designate local green space. Where there are outstanding objections at Regulation 16 stage, the Examiner will visit the spaces and assess whether it is justified against the criteria set out in para 77 of the NPPF and you may wish to elaborate as to why they are demonstrably</p>	

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
	special to a local community and identify which community it serves and holds particular local significance.	
Policy ENV4: Protecting the heritage assets of Stonehouse	Many neighbourhood plan take advantage of the ability to designate non listed buildings that contribute to local character, as non-designated heritage assets. It may be worth identifying the buildings that you would want to be covered by that designation. However, the policy as written is not in line with Secretary of State advice, as it states that it will protect all locally valued heritage assets from adverse impact. Listed buildings enjoy their own statutory protection. The approach to be taken for non-designated heritage assets is set out in Para 135 of the NPPF, which is a more nuanced approach, which weighs the significance of the asset against the scale of any loss or harm arising from the proposal.	Seek examples from GRCC of policies with similar intent from made NPs.
Policy ENV5: Protecting and Enhancing Stroudwater Canal	I have no comments to make on this policy.	

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
Policy ENV6: Protecting Views and Vistas	I am concerned that the policy as written is too imprecise. I think that an examiner would want to see particular viewpoints identified and the zones of visibility to be protected shown on a plan, otherwise it could be said to protect any view from any place in Stonehouse of, say, the Cotswold Escarpment. I do not consider that a decision maker would currently be able to use the policy with confidence. The viewpoints should be from public rather than private vantage points. Presently it could be used by a neighbour to object to the loss of a private view of the countryside from a window in their property by a proposed domestic extension. I do not envisage that this is the intent of the policy. It is worth putting the same caveat regarding planning statements and design and access statements as is used elsewhere in the Plan.	Viewpoints are identified with map and photographs at Appendix 3, Map 14. Caveat re planning statements and design and access statements as in T5 can be inserted: "Development proposals will need to demonstrate, through their design and access statement or planning statement <i>where required by the planning authority</i> , that their design, scale, height and massing does not adversely impact these existing views and vistas, and positively enhances them where possible.
Policy ENV7: High Quality Design	As above, not all development proposals are required to submit Design and Access	Caveat re Design and Access statements to be inserted as for ENV6 above.

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
	<p>Statements and as written it could be interpreted that only developments that are required to submit such statements are required to meet the requirements of the policy to be of a high quality design. The second paragraph should replace "They" with "the design of all new buildings....."</p>	<p>Wording to be changes as suggested.</p>
<p>Policy ENV 8: Provision of private outdoor amenity space in new development</p>	<p>New residential development of below 10 units are not required to submit a design and access statement. The requirement to submit one is not within the gift of the neighbourhood plan, but is set out in secondary legislation. I would suggest omitting reference to such statements from this policy and instead state that "new residential development should provide adequate well located private amenity space of an appropriate size and type etc." Would you expect flats and residential units above shops to have a rear garden? I think it is highly unlikely that in an urban area you could achieve a private sitting out area, that is not overlooked by a neighbouring window-</p>	<p>Re word as suggested.</p>

Policy	Health check comment	SNPG response
	you might suggest that the aim should be to avoid overlooking from a ground floor habitable window of a neighbouring property.	
Policy ENV9 Allotments	I would question that the requirement for an applicant to demonstrate "effective long term management plans are in place". If an allotment is an acceptable land use, it is appropriate whether it has a management plans are in place and are indeed are complied with in the future, in any event.	Remove requirement (ii) as suggested.