

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of a Working Group meeting

held on **Friday 27th September 2013**

1. **Present** – Nick Batten, Anna Creed, John Jeynes, Rick Jordan, David Joyce, Carol Kambites, Paddie Norman, Agnieszka Paszkiewicz, Vicky Redding, Clare Sheridan, Rob Waite
2. CS welcomed new members of the working group to the meeting.
3. **Apologies** – David Drew, Carl Berry

4. Update

CS informed those present that Stroud District Council has granted Stonehouse the area of within the parish boundary as the area for the Neighbourhood Plan. Other parishes that have also been granted their areas (parishes) include Eastington and Whiteshill with Ruscombe.

There was discussion of the parish boundary and DJ commented that it includes at least one AONB and other sites that are protected for specific reasons. RW added that the maps showing the complete parish boundary can be found online.

CS also informed those present that, on behalf of this group, Town Clerk Gill Jennings had applied for the initial grant. DJ asked if the full amount available (£7,000) had been applied for.

CS responded that it had and as 146 parishes nationally have already received their grant funding, it was expected that the full amount would be granted. VR asked if the submitted application could be circulated so the working group could know what exactly has been applied for.

There followed discussion on the priorities for spending this initial funding and it was commented that if all was spent on consultation there would be little money left for other issues. It was noted that the costs of the community referendum on the draft Neighbourhood plan, would be met by SDC and so did not need to be included in the initial grant.

VR added that Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) guidance is that once the area has been granted, then next stages in the development of a Neighbourhood plan are to check the national planning policies which must be complied with and to carry out a 'stock-take' of land and amenities within the plan area.

RJ asked what were the uses of a Neighbourhood plan to our community.

CK replied that a Neighbourhood Plan is essentially a 'Land Use' plan – which identifies and defines uses, such as housing, recreational, commercial and industrial development, to which the land within the plan areas should be put to meet to needs of its population over the next 20-30 years.

JJ commented that Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan will enable our community to define and reserve land for community facilities and for recreation, and to protect green spaces to enhance the longer-term sustainability of our community.

NB commented that a well-constructed Neighbourhood Plan will enable the development of the infrastructure to which developers can contribute positively to produce sustainable town community.

5. Draft Headings

RW reported that he had researched recently completed Neighbourhood plans and had uploaded several onto the Google drive for working group members to peruse. Thame neighbourhood Plan provided a useful model with some key feature that could be useful e.g. Headings for sections of the

Plan and the use of colour-coded maps that identify different types of developments within the plan area, as exemplified in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

RW and NB had thus produced a draft list of possible headings:

- 2.1 Housing
- 2.2 Working
- 2.3 Shopping
- 2.4 Getting Around
- 2.5 Leisure, Open Space and Wellbeing
- 2.6 Environment, Sustainability and Design Quality
- 2.7 Health and Disability
- 2.8 Tourism
- 2.9 Crime

JJ commented that these working headings will set the framework for our research into current provision of amenities and also as a framework for future vision for the town.

RW commented that as the process begins, it may be possible to combine or even dispense with certain headings, but the draft headings will provide a framework to start.

JJ highlighted the need to consider the balance in the amount of work needed to produce the Neighbourhood Plan, so that a useful document could be produced in a practical time-frame.

RW then briefed those present on the key features of the current Local Plan, as regards Stonehouse.

Public consultation on the draft Local Plan ends on 16th Oct.

Housing - It was noted that the number of dwellings within the town at present would need to be identified and likewise the amount of housing which will be required over the next 20-30 years. JJ commented that those housing developments already granted planning permission or even underway will contribute to the total figure required.

CK commented that In order to ascertain future housing needs, it would be necessary to determine the number of households who are thinking of extending their homes, moving house, up or down-sizing, remaining in Stonehouse or moving out of parish.

RW commented that according to the Local Plan, Stonehouse has been omitted from the 'development envelope' and that there had been a recent reduction in the number of houses needed to be built in the parish by 2031 to only 100 homes. JJ pointed out that in recent months planning permission has been granted for over 80 new homes, including 49 in the area adjacent to the former railways station behind Midland Road/Court View.

Working – RW informed those present that the Local plan identified Oldends Lane as a key site for industrial/commercial development. It was commented that while some industrial units on the Oldends Lane/Brunel way complex remain empty, new business were coming into the area, and others were expanding.

Shopping – Local plan identified need for Stonehouse to find 500m² of additional retail space to support its growing population. There was some discussion on possible locations, on and around the current High Street.

There was discussion on the potential impact of the proposed food store at Ryeford on the viability of the shops of Stonehouse High Street. Residents of Bridgend, as represented by BARFF, have concerns about the possible increased risk of flooding that this proposed development could have, as are residents of Ryeford and the Stanleys. It was agreed that the complex issues surrounding this proposed development would need careful consideration by this working group

Leisure, Open Space and wellbeing – RJ asked: What about leisure needs of the people of our community?

There was discussion about the impact on the Stonehouse community of the regeneration of the canal (Stroudwater Navigation) in terms of its use as an open space for recreation and leisure. PN commented that in contrast to Stroud, if you are walking along the canal, there are no cafés/eating places accessible in Stonehouse and there are no locations in the town for specifically regular evening entertainment. It was noted that other similar-sized communities in the district and beyond have such venues, and that in the past such venues existed in Stonehouse but had been lost.

JJ briefed the meeting on recent developments regarding the proposed ‘handover’ of the Ship Inn site by GCC to SDC. A meeting with SDC Chief Executive David Hagg, County Councillor Lesley Williams, JJ and Town/District Councillor Chris Brine will take place on Thursday 3rd October where assurances regarding the Ship Inn site remaining in public ownership will be sought. Members were disappointed to learn that GCC had recently sold the land strip, between the former boathouse and Skew Bridge to Wycliffe College, as this reduced the amount of land bordering the canal itself that could be used as the gateway into Stonehouse town.

There was brief discussion about the ‘Secret Garden’ adjacent to the High Street Medical Centre, which was been sold in the past few years, but the current owner is unknown. It is currently unable to be used by the community, despite its central and highly-accessible location. CS agreed to liaise with the Town Clerk to find out who owns this site.

6. Questionnaire and Consultation

Consultation with the local community would form the basis of research into current provision in the town in terms of housing amenities, commerce and industry. JJ commented previous consultations on the Community Plan can give some ideas as to what is valued by members of the community and what people would like to see developed.

It was noted that this must include communication to members of the Town’s community the constraints of the Neighbourhood plan, so that views and ideas for future development would be aspirational but not unrealistic.

CK presented a Questionnaire which she had begun to draft. The initial questions would focus on demographics to ensure a representative cross-section of the local community is enabled to contribute their comments regarding current provision in Stonehouse in 2013. JJ drew attention to the model questionnaire contained within the Hunter Page document on line.

There followed discussion as the ways to engage all sectors of the local community. DJ highlighted the need to identify groups within the wider community on which to focus contact. RJ raised the importance of further developing links with groups within the community, e.g. APT, schools, WI, which could be used to signpost or distribute questionnaires.

It was suggested that the Questionnaire could go out via Stonehouse News, so that all households were targeted. But this would need proactive follow up and DJ emphasised the importance of directly engaging with the local community by actually speaking to people, by knocking on doors and asking people for their views. In last consultation, people given cameras to record those areas they valued, wished to be protected or even developed. He suggested that every time there is an event in the town, representatives from this working group need to be there, so the community members realise that this is a long-term project with which their contribution is essential and valued.

NB suggested contacting Stroud District Council's planning team to gain their views on the development needs of Stonehouse, as this would prove useful in providing background information and the constraints of national planning frameworks.

Key sites for development that are significant to the community include: Ship Inn site (as gateway to Town from the regenerated Canal), Spa Inn site, Former Church Hall site and Library site on Elm Road.

7. AOB

CS reported that as Eastington Parish Council are also drawing up their own Neighbourhood Plan, there would need to be communication and co-operation with them, in order to have consistency at the shared boundary between the parishes which form the Neighbourhood plan areas. As Chair of this working group, she agreed to make and maintain contact with Eastington Parish council. It was noted that the neighbourhood plans of all parishes must be compatible with the Stroud District Local Plan.

It was suggested that for the next meeting an enlarged copy of the parish map be obtained so that this could be annotated with key sites and key issues to be further investigated.

8. Date of next meeting

Friday 25th October 2013 at 6pm in the Town Hall

Actions:

CK to compile a draft questionnaire for perusal and comments by working group members via the Google drive.

VR to draw up a project plan to identify work streams that need to be pursued and enable progress monitoring.

CS to make and maintain contact with Eastington Parish council re co-operation on neighbourhood plans.

RW agreed to will compile an Introduction to the draft Plan, for perusal and comments by working group members, via the Google drive.

RW to liaise with Town Clerk to obtain an enlarged copy of the parish map for next meeting.