

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
held in the Melland Room on Monday 10 November 2014**

Present: Ian Bacon (IB), Brian Duckett (BD), Eric Eisenhandler (EE), Richard Farrell (RF), Vanessa Fox (VF), Angela Hoy (AH), Mike Marshall (MM), Dermot Mathias (Chair) (DM), Pat Mattimore (PM), Andrew Maxted (AMx), Anne Millman (AM), Alex Musson (AMus), Anton Nath (AN), John Ogden (JO).

Observing: Mike Evans

Apologies: Nick Chancellor (NC), Joe Goyder (JG), Jo Lakeland (JL), Kally Peigne, Gwyn Rees (GR) (KP)

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**, 13 October, were agreed. DM has not contacted Kler Group, as the Parish Council was doing so.

2. **Update on housing needs survey.** The volunteer force has collected about 50% response, so far. Householders have on the whole been friendly and engaged. The questionnaires will be couriered to the research company on Friday. Data entry and processing will be completed in mid-December, and AM and NC will write a top-line report, to be done by 12 January, and full report by 11 February. VF to request a stop-press from the Blewbury Bulletin to remind people to return their forms by Friday.

AM, NC
VF

3. **Update on landscape appraisal.** Brian Duckett reported on work-in-progress. He first presented his firm (Hankinson Duckett Associates, HDA) which does landscape assessments at district and county level, with experience of supporting Neighbourhood Plans nationally.
The assessment is evidence-based, to see if there's capacity for new development, and what is important about the landscape character. It takes into account :
 - Landscape value – Blewbury's position in the AONB influences this
 - Heritage assets, conservation area
 - Landscape and visual sensitivity – topography, land use, visual sensitivity (Blewbury is hidden in the trees); BD showed a table designed to identify inherent landscape quality, visual contribution, value judgement, on a scale of 1-5
 - Consistency of landscape in relation to settlement form and pattern
 - Rurality of surrounding landscape: how does it support, and how is it part of the landscape?

From that, a matrix is produced of landscape capacity.

Because the work is still under way BD did not commit himself to any overall conclusions. However he did say that the landscape of Blewbury is such that there will be limited capacity for new development.

RF asked to what extent would HAD's work identify areas in the heart of the village which should be protected? BD explained that the survey will highlight sensitive areas of the village which should be preserved.

DM said that the study will be made available to the Parish, and will almost certainly be in the public domain.

AMx pointed out that Part 1 of the VOWH Local Plan 2031 gives high priority to conserving the North Wessex Downs AONB (see extract from the plan below). Although the survey will point out areas which have greater or lesser sensitivity, the whole village is protected by being in the AONB. Work on the report is still in progress.

The Parish Council is meeting on Wednesday and is likely to request a meeting with Barton Wilmore, about the possible Woodway Road development.

Extract from Core Policy 44 from Local Plan 2031, Part 1:

High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and planning decisions will have regard to its setting. Proposals that support the economy and social well-being of communities located in the AONB, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged provided they do not conflict with the aims of conservation and enhancement.

4. **Update from AMx on VOWH Local Plan 2031 Part 1**, published last Friday. This version of the plan should be the final draft and will be submitted to the Secretary of State for inspection in February. No changes will be made to this plan by the VOWH and any material comments will be passed through to the inspector.

In terms of new housing this plan deals with the strategic sites with development potential of 200 houses or over. Blewbury is in the South East Sub-Area of the Vale which will account for some 75% of the Vale's overall housing needs. Taking into account proposed development in the strategic sites, existing known commitments and a conservative estimate for windfall sites, the shortfall in supply in the area is only 56 houses. That means that in our area of the Vale, which roughly covers the area from Wantage and Grove to the west, to Blewbury and south Didcot in the east, only 56 new houses will be required up to 2031. This shortfall will be addressed in Part 2 of the

plan but it is envisaged that there will be minimal or no requirement for new development to take place in the village. That is not to say that the BNDP group could not encourage new development if required by the village, nor that a developer could apply for permission on a speculative basis.

AMx also pointed out that Oxford City is likely to have a significant shortfall of houses which will probably have to be taken up by the other districts in the county. However this is unlikely to create a significant need for development in Blewbury.

IB asked why no school is being built to serve the expansion of Great Western Park, Didcot, and why the roads have not yet been upgraded. AMx said that he could not comment on that because it was in South Oxford DC. However he did say that the Local Plan sets out how the Vale will ensure that the new infrastructure required will be funded in advance or in conjunction with new development.

5. **Proposed Woodway Road Development.** Chris Lakeland, as Chairman of the PC, is setting up a meeting with Barton Wilmore who are the Kler Group's planning consultants on this scheme. He is likely to ask DM to attend. However without having the results of the housing needs survey and without a clear mandate from the village DM will mainly listen to what they have to say.
6. **Living in the Village.** AH has circulated a list of clubs and societies, and is compiling a database. AM is building up the demographic work. PM asked for guidance about the way forward for this aspect of the Plan.

IB suggested it was time to think about the end product – chapter headings etc. DM agreed to draw up a suggested structure as a "straw man" prior to the next meeting.

7. **Engagement.** Website is looking good, updated with Local Plan (which will be flagged as a news item). Facebook is ongoing and very lively. Bulletin deadline approaching (19 November). DM will make a final plea for survey returns in the next Bulletin.
8. **Sustainability.** Nothing to report.
9. **Any Other Business.** RF talked about the email sent around to the Parish Council, asking that a full rather than an outline planning application be made for the Woodway development. RF explained that he has subsequently been advised that there were disadvantages to this approach and therefore it will not be pursued.

Date of next meeting: Monday 8 December