MINUTES OF THE MEEETING OF
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM ON TUESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.00 PM

All NDP SG meetings will be held virtually via Zoom until further notice, in accordance with Government Regulations. Meetings are recorded for the use of the Minutes Secretary only.

PRESENT

Steering Group: Mr Jock Rainey (Chair), Mrs Clare Malyon (vice-chair), Mrs Lesley Blay, Mr Roger Ingles, Mr Kevin Payne, Mr Graham Tyler, Mr Tim Willis (Project Manager) and Cllr Laurie Wright.

Co-ordination Group : Cllr Miss Tracie Ball and Cllr Robert Grainger.

Plus: Cllr Tim Harvey-Smith, Mr Paul Jennings and Mrs Maria Meede (Minutes Secretary).

OPEN FORUM

There were no questions or queries raised under the open forum part of the meeting.

64. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES SECRETARY

The Chairman advised that although Mrs G Waddilove has resigned from her role as NDP Secretary, she has agreed to maintain a close relationship with the NDP and is happy to be called upon for support if required. The Chairman then confirmed that Mrs Meede had offered to undertake the duties of Minutes Secretary for the NDP, but she feels unable to take on the full Secretarial role. The Chairman proposed that Mrs Meede be confirmed as the Minutes Secretary for the NDP, which was seconded by Mr Ingles and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: For Mrs Meede to be the Minutes Secretary for the NDP.

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologises for absence given for this meeting.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (existence and nature) for items on the Agenda

No declarations of interest for any item on the agenda were made. The Chairman advised that members could declare an interest later in the meeting should this become apparent for any agenda item.

67. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR 27TH OCTOBER 2020 AND 23RD NOVEMBER 2020

All members of the NDP Steering Group had been given the opportunity to review the minutes of the Steering Group meetings held on 27th October 2020 and 23rd November 2020 prior to the meeting.

27th October 2020 - Following a brief discussion about amendments that had been made to the minutes, Cllr Wright proposed approving the minutes, which was seconded by Cllr Miss Ball and the motion was passed.

23rd November 2020 - Following a brief discussion, Cllr Wright proposed approving the minutes, which was seconded by Mr Tyler and the motion was passed.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Steering Group meetings held on 27th October 2020 and 23rd November 2020 were approved for adoption by those who had been present at the meeting. The Zoom recordings for these meetings will now be deleted.

68. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to note.

69. FINANCE

Cllr Miss Ball advised that there was nothing of a financial nature to report at the current time. She confirmed that the Parish Council had budgeted £2000 as requested for work relating to the NDP.

70. PROJECT MANAGER: REPORT ON PROGRESS AND THE NEXT STEPS

Mr Willis (Project Manager) reported that the Co-ordination Group (CG) had recently met, and it had been suggested that the CG are no longer required for the original purpose they were set up for, especially as the plan is nearly in its last stage of completion. It was felt that, for streamlining purposes, the CG should amalgamate with the Steering Group (SG) in order to complete the plan. The CG now needs to be an integral part of the SG, and it was generally felt that the CG should meet as and when required to fulfil a need or purpose – rather than on a regular basis even when not required. Mr Willis therefore proposed that the CG moves from having regular meetings to a group that meets when required.

The Chairman stated that the suspension of regular and scheduled CG meetings would require CG members to ensure any reports were sent to the Minutes Secretary so they could be distributed along with the SG meeting agendas.
Some SG members raised concerns that decision making within a larger group may be less efficient, nimble and more time consuming. It was noted that the SG should be a vehicle to approve policies and strategies, and make decisions with the information given to them – rather than being part of the whole discussion process.
A concern was also raised about ensuring the NDP Working Group as a whole complies with the Constitution and Terms of Reference. It was agreed that this would need looking into and some amendments and revisions may be required – which Cllr Miss Ball agreed to facilitate.
It was suggested that the CG could meet up and have a short meeting before each SG meeting, just to ensure all information being shared with the SG was accurate and relevant. All members seemed to think this was a good suggestion.
As there was a general consensus support to the proposal, subject to the situation being monitored and reviewed as necessary, the Chairman asked for a vote on the proposal put forward by Mr Willis. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Wright, and the motion was passed. It was also agreed that the constitution and Terms of Reference may need to be amended and, if necessary, endorsed at the next SG meeting.
RESOLVED: For the CG to suspend regular scheduled meetings, and instead meet by exception as and when required.
RESOLVED: For Cllr Miss Ball to amend the NDP Constitution and Terms of Reference for endorsement at the next SG meeting.
Mr Willis then reported that the draft NDP had received its 'health check' from Avon Planning Services (APS), and this had now been completed. Mr Willis explained he had met with APS to look at the plan, with the aim of presenting the plan to the Parish Council. However, APS advised that as the plan is close to its pre-submission consultation, for expediency they recommended submitting the plan direct to RBC for its Local Authority 'health check' (not legal check at this stage). After a pre-meeting discussion with the Chairman, Mr Willis stated that he followed the advice, and the plan is now with RBC. He made it clear that APS had confirmed that the plan was in the latter stages of this process. Due to this, Mr Willis felt that any consultations or further work should be deferred until the plan has been received back from RBC. Following a query about the process, Mr Willis advised that once the plan is received back from RBC, any suggested amendments or recommendations will be reviewed and the plan updated as required. The plan will then go to the Parish Council for endorsement. Mr Willis then explained some of the next steps for the Plan, which include consultations, RBC legal check, inspection by an examiner and a referendum. The final plan will be a formal part of the RBC Local Plan.
SG members responded positively and were pleased with the progress made. Cllr Grainger said he was surprised that the plan had been submitted without endorsement from the SG, and Mr Willis responded that the RBC 'health check' was within the Project Plan and members had previously stated they wanted progress to be made.
Cllr Wright proposed the SG should endorse the actions taken by Mr Willis, which was seconded by Mr Ingles. Mr Willis abstained from the vote, but the motion was passed.
RESOLVED: The SG endorse the actions taken by Mr Willis to send the Draft NDP to RBC for a 'health check'.

71. <u>HOUSING CONSULTATION</u>

The Chairman explained that this was an item that had been raised previously, and asked Cllr Grainger, as the Housing Group lead, to explain the need to the SG.
Cllr Grainger expressed a concern that there is insufficient evidence within the NDP relating to the allocation of sites for housing. He felt that allocating sites without appropriate evidence of adequate consultation would mean the plan may be found lacking by the examiner.
Cllr Grainger explained that, as far as he is aware, it is now not possible for an NDP to allocate Rural Exception sites in the Green Belt as this is a site specific matter that needs to accord with Policy H4 of the Local Plan and can only be taken forward by RBC. He felt this means that the School Street site (Site H3), which the Wolston NDP proposes for allocation from 2026 to meet a future need for affordable housing, may need to be removed from the draft plan. Cllr Grainger said that in his opinion this now only leaves three sites available for allocation - the allotments (north side) where the Local Plan states at Policy GP2 that development will be permitted, and the two garage sites on Manor Estate where development is supported by Local Plan Policy GP3.

Mr Willis responded that the Plan had been through a 'health check' with APS, who had not raised any of this as an issue. He stated that APS are the experts and therefore any further work or consultations should wait until a response is received from RBC after their 'health check' and he did not feel there was any need for a further survey at this time – especially due to the stage the plan is currently at.
Cllr Miss Ball reminded members that the NDP had held a public session in the Baptist Church in November 2019, where feedback from residents had been received, recorded and noted. She felt that a Housing Needs Survey had only been carried out approximately three years ago, and so there was no need to repeat this.
Cllr Grainger advised that guidance on Neighbourhood Plans states that policies should be clear, concise and supported by appropriate evidence, and he explained that he was proposing a Housing Consultation rather than Housing Needs Survey, in order to get a steer from residents. Mrs Malyon also felt that consultations in the past had been Local Green Space led, and so supported Cllr Grainger in that the NDP may not have consulted fully on housing sites – which she felt are the most contentious part of the plan.
SG members generally agreed with Mr Willis that they should be await the response from RBC following their 'health check' before making a decision, and if required it was felt that the consultation could take place at a later date. Cllr Grainger asked for it to be noted that in his opinion, the NDP need to consult on sites proposed for allocation of housing, as without this evidence he felt the plan may be found wanting by the examiner. The Chairman noted the concerns raised about the possible insufficient evidence in relation to site allocation, but as the general consensus from the SG was that they had no concerns at this time, he asked for the item to be deferred for the moment. He recognised that the item could be raised again if a need was highlighted by RBC or APS, but at the current time SG members felt this was unnecessary.

72. <u>CONFIRMATION OF THE 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE</u>

The Chairman asked the Minutes Secretary to produce a meeting schedule for endorsement by SG members at the next SG meeting. He asked that, for constitutional reasons, provisions be made for the CG to meet prior to the SG when required.

RESOLVED: For the Minutes Secretary to produce a draft meeting schedule for the SG, with provisions for CG meetings (where necessary) for endorsement at the next SG meeting

73. <u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u>

Cllr Grainger highlighted the need to arrange for the editing, layout and artwork of the Plan, to transform and prepare the document for the final submission stage. Mr Willis agreed that although the document won't need much editing, this issue will need looking at. A discussion took place about the benefits of getting professional assistance, and SG members agreed that the final document needs to not only look good, but be reader/user friendly. The Chairman asked Cllr Grainger if he would be happy to speak to Mr Nick Wongsam (a Wolston resident who specialises in work such as this) and Cllr Grainger confirmed he would be happy to do so, and report back at the next SG meeting. Cllr Wright then proposed that Cllr Grainger find out more information about refining the document ready for final submission, which was seconded by Mrs Malyon and the motion was passed.

RESOLVED: For Cllr Grainger to liaise with Mr Wongsam about the layout and artwork for the NDP, and report back to members at the next SG meeting.

As there were no further items for discussion, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

The next SG meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 23rd March 2021 at 7pm via Zoom.