

Minutes of a meeting of the NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN JOINT COUNCILS COMMITTEE (NPJCC) held in the Committee Room at Mountfield on Thursday 28 November 2024 at 10.00am.

PRESENT: Members: Cllrs Dave Bolwell, Jonathan Bourbon (Bridport Town Council), Kelvin Clayton (Bridport Town Council), Andrew Holdridge (Bridport Town Council), Patrick Mooney (Bridport Town Council), and Paul Hartmann (Symondsburry Parish Council).

Also present: Cllr David Worthington (Bridport Town Council), Will Austin (Town Clerk) and David Dixon (Project Manager).

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Anne Langridge and Anna Killick.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: that, subject to the correction of page numbering, the minutes of the meeting of the NPJCC held on 6 June 2024 be approved, and that the Chairman should sign these as a correct record.

RESOLVED: that the cancellation of a further meeting scheduled for 5 September 2024 be noted.

14. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BRIDPORT AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Project Manager summarised a list of amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, proposed by the Steering Group and tabled with the agenda, ENCL: 3949. Some were considered relatively minor textual amendments; others, highlighted in the list circulated, were of greater significance and members were asked to focus on these.

Members discussed:

- Changes to the text arising from the Community Governance Review, as a result of which three participating councils had been dissolved, and there had been corresponding adjustments to the boundaries of Bridport Town Council and Symondsburry Parish Council;
- Whether provisions for exception sites would be strengthened in light of the recent application for a retirement community development off South Street, Bridport. The Project Manager advised that a revised Housing Needs Assessment would inform this part of the plan;
- The removal of policy H6(2), and whether the review would remain a 'light' review in this context;

- Whether evidence would be available that would inform a possible primary residence restriction;
- Whether the 'Design for Living' section of the plan could include design for future generations rather than a historical focus. The Project Manager advised this would require a design guide and he would discuss this with Jim Tigg, who was looking at this section; and
- Whether building standards would be to Future Homes Standards, including an anticipated update to these standards within the next year. The Project Manager advised that HAPPI standards applied in the current version of the plan, and that he would liaise with Jim Tigg regarding any proposed changes.

There being no concerns regarding the list as tabled, it was:

RESOLVED: that the list of proposed amendments to BANP 2020-2036, developed by the BANP Steering Group, be agreed.

The Project Manager reported that a Workspace and Business Needs Assessment questionnaire had been launched by Stir to Action, who were also carrying out associated interviews. Analysis of the results and a workshop would follow in January 2025. This would help inform locations, and transport arrangements. A further report would be provided to the NPJCC in March 2025.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Project Manager be noted.

The Project Manager circulated a briefing note on actions currently being pursued in relation to housing, and introduced arrangements for the development of a revised Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). He reported that:

- Funding from Locality had been agreed;
- AECOM would produce the HNA and an initial meeting had taken place;
- AECOM were up-to-date with current policy and regulation;
- AECOM would provide a standard document that could be narrated and interpreted locally; and
- The production of the HNA, including AECOM's work and local interpretation by the Steering Group, was estimated to take 12 to 14 weeks in total. A draft would be circulated to the NPJCC for informal comment, before formal consideration likely to be in June 2024.

Members discussed:

- How strong the HNA would be in helping to 'shape' developments. The Project Manager advised that this bespoke version should be more powerful. Cllr Dave Bolwell advised that he had heard at Dorset Council's Planning Committee that a strong HNA was rare;
- The impact of an out-of-date Local Plan, which should give the Neighbourhood Plan greater weight;
- The importance of terminology in determining the weight of the HNA;

- Whether additional external support would help to deliver the most robust policy possible;
- How the recent retirement community application could be used to help develop policies; and
- The possible use of other emerging Neighbourhood Plans to help develop policy.

The Project Manager further reported that his discussion with AECOM had raised the possibility of Locality funding for a site options assessment. This would be a standard package that looked at available sites and their suitability for development, and would provide robust text for incorporation into the Neighbourhood Plan. He asked members to consider whether to proceed with this.

Members discussed:

- Whether this assessment would include brownfield sites. The Project Manager confirmed that it would;
- The issue of 'green lungs', which Cllr Paddy Mooney advised was highlighted by the proposed sale of Watton Hill. The Project Manager reminded members that the current Plan included site designations;
- The possibility of toughening site designations with a specific exclusion for sites unsuitable for housing; and
- The importance of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Local Plan, and the five-year housing land supply in controlling site uses.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the availability of external funding to cover the cost, a site options assessment be pursued.

The Project Manager summarised information regarding support for community land trusts, contained in the briefing note on housing actions circulated earlier in the meeting. This support was an important contribution to addressing housing need.

Cllr Paddy Mooney declared an interest as a member and shareholder of Bridport Area Community Housing (BACH) Trust.

Cllr Mooney reported that BACH was attempting to resolve a dispute with Magna Housing over Boldwood House, and was trying to acquire Chancery House and other sites. The Project Manager advised that a site options assessment could help to inform this discussion.

Cllr Mooney asked whether there was any information available on housing sites that would advise what would be appropriate in Bridport, in terms of size, type, and other matters. The Project Manager advised that the HNA would consider this, and he would ask whether it could also form part of the site options assessment.

Cllr Mooney advised that he had previously asked questions about flats above shops, and was often told that access was a restricting issue. He further reported that planning applications for the redevelopment of ST Michael's

Trading Estate would be consider by Dorset Council's Planning Committee on 12 December 2024.

RESOLVED: that the reports of the Project Manager be noted with thanks.

15. BUDGET REPORT

The Town Clerk summarised a report, ENCL: 3926, setting out estimated costs of administering the NPJCC totalling £6,530 in 2024/25, and proposing contributions from the two participating councils as follows

- Bridport Town Council: £5,931
- Symondsburry Parish Council: £599

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the report be noted, and that the proposed contributions be approved.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council costs would be incorporated into its budgeting process, and that he would request the agreed contribution from Symondsburry Parish Council.

16. OTHER INFORMATION UPDATE ITEMS

No information items were reported.

17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates for the next meetings were scheduled to be 27 February 2025 and 22 May 2025, both at 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 10.59am.

The next NPJCC meeting is scheduled for 10:00am on 27 February 2025