

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE THURLESTONE PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Held in the Yeo Room of the Village Hall on 10 November 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Tony Goddard (Chairman) (AG), Sue Crowther (SC), Peter Hurrell (PH), Gary Luddington (GL), Kit Marshall (KM), David Martin (DM), Charlie Mitchelmore (CM), Jill Munn (JM), Robin MacDonald (RM), Judy Pearce (JP), Alan Taylor-Bigg (ATB).

- 1. Mr Nicholas Johnston, owner of the Bantham Estate**, had been invited to attend as part of the evidence gathering function of the steering group. It was agreed that other major landowners should also be asked to meet the steering group and CM volunteered to invite Geoffrey Stidston to attend the next meeting on 1st December (*an invitation which Mr Stidston has now accepted*).

The Chairman invited Nicholas Johnston (NJ) to explain his vision.

NJ explained that he had been attracted to the Bantham Estate because socially, economically and even politically, it was similar to the Great Tew estate [*in Oxfordshire, already owned by NJ*]. There was an amount of tied accommodation, as well as private homes, and both Bantham and Great Tew punch above their weight in services against the number of residents. NJ said development needs to reflect this, as it has at Great Tew, through renewal and refurbishment. He said he is fortunate to have time on his side and to be able to take a long-term view.

NJ went on to say that good professional estate management needs to consider the whole holistically and it is about far more than the beach – the estuary and agriculture often seem to get forgotten. Sustainable farming is as important as sustainable development in achieving a sustainable community.

Questions were then invited from the steering group.

The first was about any proposed new housing.

NJ said he had sent his initial ideas to the steering group in June [*on the understanding they would be treated in confidence*]. He had had a meeting with SHDC to discuss how the Estate would fit in with the council's aspirations. The council said they had a problem with land allocations coming forward, because local farmers were unwilling to put land up for development. Bantham has hardly grown in the last seventy years, whereas Thurlestone has grown hugely. The Estate could contribute to all three villages in the parish but any development needs to be balanced across the community in a way that lots of people will support it. NJ said the trust of the community was very important and that he had gained this at Great Tew where people now understood he worked for the good of the community.

The next questions suggested any houses built in Bantham would remain empty as they would be second homes.

NJ replied that the Estate houses are not empty and that some new houses would remain with the Estate and therefore not be empty either. He agreed that full homes were much better for the community and jobs and that a vibrant active community attracts full time residents.

There followed some discussion about the enforceability of a principal occupancy condition used in some other neighbourhood plans in force, as this had not yet been tested.

NJ then went on to say that he thought the demand for holiday homes was recognised and that the Estate could use the profit gained to build homes to rent. He said he was more than willing to discuss this openly and would want to discuss it further with the steering group. He admitted this approach was practical rather than noble, but that it was all part of his holistic approach. He said that if, for instance, the agriculture of the Estate went organic, it would increase the wellbeing of the Estate, so if one five-bedroomed second home could provide community wellbeing, this could also be a good thing. He said profit would trickle down to make other things work. Overall, he thought a balanced approach to achieve more full time residents was important.

The next questioner asked how this two-step plan – holiday homes first for local homes next – could be credible to the community?

NJ explained it would be a sequential plan over a period of 15 years and that there were devices in planning for ensuring it would happen, e.g. a s.106 agreement [*a planning obligation drawn up and enforceable by the council*].

There followed a question about employment, broadband and the lack of mobile phone signal.

NJ said he probably employed about 35 people at Great Tew. There was only one full time employee when he took over at Bantham last October. There are now 6 full time employees, several sub-contractors and still the three part timers on the gate to the beach. He said a successful estate finds lots of employment opportunities and he can envisage more through leisure opportunities on the estuary, boatbuilding and moorings. He said other opportunities would obviously not be in the 'articulated lorry' class, they had to be realistic, but there was scope for incremental increases. Self-employment would be important.

The Chairman asked about time scales.

The answer was that there were legacy issues. NJ said work was needed on the Bantham portfolio, particularly the listed properties. He said this had to be paid for from within the Estate, so it would be beneficial to the Estate to fast-track a scheme which could release capital back into it. He said that even so nothing was immediately imminent and that the first scheme was likely to be behind the church in Thurlestone and would involve several stakeholders.

Several members of the steering group were keen NJ should issue a statement as it was known he was addressing the group. NJ replied that he was unwilling to be bounced into making one because the thought processes were still evolving.

It was generally agreed that ongoing liaison and evolving together was the best way forward. NJ agreed he and his team would be available to the steering group at any time, and thanked RM for the offer to comment anytime in Village Voice.

NJ left the meeting at about 8.15 p.m.

2. Assessment of information obtained from the above meeting:

It was agreed that the lines of communication were open, that something in Thurlestone may happen in the short term and that the enforceability of a principle occupancy covenant needed to be investigated.

3. Apologies: Chris White

4. Minutes of the last meeting: these were agreed

The next agenda items were taken out of order:

7. Setting up of working groups

SC explained the topic diagram she had prepared. The three topics in the black circles (Homes, Economy and Wellbeing) mirrored those in the proposed *Our Plan: South Hams* and were the areas in which sustainable development may be possible. They would be the subject of planning applications. The topics in the yellow circles (Environment, Heritage, Infrastructure and Resources) would feed into those areas and may influence and act as constraints upon such development.

Wellbeing (KM):

KM had enlisted the following to assist him: Vanessa Barton, Thurlestone resident recently retired from Kingsbridge Community College; Anna Martin, retired GP resident in West Buckland; and two local teenagers, aged 13 and 17. Once KM has gathered the facts, he can move towards formulating objectives. There will be overlap areas, where he will need to liaise with GL and SC.

Economy (GL):

GL's group consists of PH, DM and Cary Ryan Carter, resident of West Buckland. GL now has a list of commercial landowners and redundant barns. He will locate and map them, once he has an OS plan.

Homes (SC):

The parish has been subdivided into 6 geographic areas and SC has prepared a proforma for each area, which is to be used to record details of the existing housing stock. JP and CM are assisting with the main street and roads adjoining it in Thurlestone, whilst SC has arranged to see the chairmen of the management companies on the Yarmer estate and the Mead. JP is to obtain census and household information from SHDC. Other members of the group are to be recruited from Bantham and Buckland

Of the other topics, the following were nominated:

Heritage – JP (much of this work already done)

Infrastructure – ATB (nothing needed immediately)

Resources – CW has agreed to do this. It will include renewable energy etc.

Environment – TBA

Further maps were needed which JP would try to procure from SHDC, the remainder being made up from OS Mapping.

5. Project Plan

This would change as it evolved. SC briefly described the requirements of the different stages.

The draft Vision – SC had prepared a draft Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan and it was agreed the word ‘vibrant’ should be added. *[The final draft Vision would be put to the community, as part of the Questionnaire]*

The draft Objectives – SC had also prepared draft Objectives. The whole group needs to think about what the Neighbourhood Plan is trying to achieve. *[These too would be put to the community, as part of the Questionnaire]*

Funding – DM now has details of how to apply for funding and when. The question of the parish hall costs and a possible grant from the Parish Council was discussed. The Chairman has put in a bid to the Parish Council for up to £1000, but it was agreed that this should be reduced to £500. This was urgently needed to cover such items as photocopying and OS plans.

7. Evidence Gathering and Questionnaire

SC said the evidence base is critical in the preparation and formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan and that we will need to regularly review the draft Vision and Objectives as the Plan progresses.

There was some discussion about the exact timing of the Questionnaire. At the moment, it was timed to start in February 2016 and finish at the end of April. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting. However, there were concerns about the capacity of the group to do all the work involved and whether it would be necessary to recruit a survey manager. SC, ATB and GL were tasked with trying to find someone in the community before the next meeting, and ATB requested an advert in Village Voice.

It was agreed that henceforward the Project Plan should be a standing Agenda item.

Consultation stage: RM and CW would oversee this. A list of consultees had been supplied by SHDC.

Houskeeping rules:

- Confidentiality: We shall often be discussing commercially sensitive information.
- Watch email trails carefully and preferably start a new email each time.
- Use of the parish website to disseminate minutes etc.

Next agenda:

Budget/parish grant

Project Plan

Market research

Website

Actions:

- JP and AG to obtain OS plans for distribution to working groups to assist with their evidence gathering.
- SC to check the legal aspects of evidence gathering and JP to check SHDC's requirements.
- AG, ATB, GL and DM (in SC's absence): agree (a) appointment of survey manager and (b) application for funding for that and anything else.
- All: to send their biographies to SC for the website.
- JP and SC to review and amend the existing draft Community Engagement Strategy.
- All: To comment on SC's draft Vision and thoughts about the draft Objectives of the Plan before the next meeting.

AOB:

JP produced the map with dots showing the distribution of those attending the Community Engagement Meeting. She also thanked SC for all her work and organisation since the last meeting.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 1st December at 7.30 in the Yeo room.

The meeting closed at approx. 9.50 pm