

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE THURLESTONE PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
Held in the Yeo Room of the Parish Hall on 11 January 2017 at 2pm

Present: Tony Goddard (Chairman) (AG), Sue Crowther (SC), Robin MacDonald (RM), Kit Marshall (KM), Jill Munn (JM), Charlie Mitchelmore (CM), Gary Luddington (GL), Judy Pearce (JP) and Chris White (CW)

Also attending: Sally Martin (SM), Kay Barry (KB), Carey Ryan-Carter (CRC), Sian Hester-Williams (SHW) and Will Southcott (WS)

Attending for Bantham Estate: Nicholas Johnston (NJ), Ryan Hooper (RH) and David Hunt (DH)

Apologies: David Martin

1. Presentation by Nicholas Johnston of his plans for the Bantham Estate

AG opened the meeting by welcoming NJ and stating the following ground rules:

1. Everything will be minuted and, along with any plans or drawings referred to, be posted on the Parish website.
2. We understand that NJ has familiarised himself with the Neighbourhood Plan pages on the Parish website including the results of the Questionnaire, the Family Events and Housing Needs Survey, and that his intention is to respond to our findings, noting ways he feels he can address the community's aspirations.
3. It will be the intention of the Steering Group to listen to the proposals and, if appropriate, ask questions to clarify the proposals. It is not for us to negotiate or express an opinion. We must remain non-partisan.
4. Most importantly, nothing we say - or do not say - should be interpreted as either endorsing or opposing the proposals.
5. The extent to which the Steering Group takes account of the proposals will be for subsequent impartial discussion.

NJ thanked the Steering Group for the opportunity to make this presentation and introduced Ryan Hooper, Bantham Estate Manager, and David Hunt, Estate Architect and Surveyor based at Great Tew who had drawn up the draft plans. NJ expected detailed plans to be prepared locally and not remotely. He would also hope to use local tradesmen. NJ pointed out that these are draft ideas, conceptual and very early on in the process. It would be at least 6 months before he is ready for a public consultation.

NJ commenced by referring to the findings of the Family Events, the Parish Questionnaire and the Housing Needs Survey, which he summarised as follows:

Family Events:

- *the unspoilt nature of the beaches is much valued and most people don't want more facilities*
- *the toilets at Bantham could be improved and outdoor cold showers would be welcome, particularly by those involved in water sports*

- *top of the sports and recreation wish lists came a playground (near Bantham and Buckland) and a skateboard park, followed by a level grass sports pitch, swimming pool and adventure playground*
- *a very positive response to cycle tracks, in particular, between Buckland and Bantham*
- *concerns about the safety of walking between Buckland and Bantham, and Buckland and Thurlestone, particularly with children or by children on their own*
- *more parking provision needed for the primary school*

Parish Questionnaire:

- *Generally there was a small majority of respondents who felt more housing was needed*
- *82% supported infill development*
- *64% supported adding to existing clusters*
- *On the local economy 72% supported more employment opportunities within the parish*
- *New cycle and foot links between the villages was heavily supported (and cross-sectional support) and the only people who can assist with this is the Estate*
- *Almost unanimous support for protection of environment, particularly the beaches and the Avon estuary*
- *Almost unanimous support for better mobile and broadband capability*
- *Strong support for better car parking facilities in the parish with respondents showing a greater preference for one single car park.*
- *Renewable energy seems to throw up a mixed reaction, mainly due to scale and visibility.*

Housing Needs survey

- *Half the respondents were over 65*
- *81 respondents said their housing needs would change in the next 10 years*
- *Of those under 65 the property price they could afford to buy was £125k to £350k or to rent at a figure of £500 - £650 pcm (7 respondents said they needed to move in the next 5 years)*
- *The recommended level of new affordable housing provision for the parish over the next 5 years is as follows: Affordable rented 1 x 1 bedroom general needs 2 x 2 bedroom general needs 1 x 3 bedroom general needs Discount market/shared ownership 1 x 2 or 3 bedroom property*
- *It would appear that all the property for sale at the present time (except possibly one flat) is way too expensive. One rental property available in Bantham at £875 pcm*
- *The HNS concluded: It is clear that there is a disproportion between those over the age of 65 and those in other age groups living in the parish. If the community wishes to address its unbalanced age demographic in their Neighbourhood Plan, then the provision of additional affordable and rental housing for young families/couples and more reasonably priced 2 and 3-bedroom open market housing of mixed type and tenure and/or self build plots is needed. By encouraging younger people to the area, this will ensure the sustainability of the parish all year round and not just during the peak holiday period.*

NJ explained that these plans for the Bantham Estate are a direct response to the findings shown above. NJ distributed 3 plans and then proceeded to show how he could address the “wish list” for the Parish and how it could be paid for.

Bantham village and West Buckland (drawing no 15/10/SK01 – [click here](#)). NJ said it would be very difficult to address the “wish for” new housing for sale in the £125-350k price bracket requested, but that it would be easier to address the rental market.

Item M on the plan refers to 8 new family houses for rent in the region of £650 per month. A Section 106 Agreement could ensure they would remain at a rent that would be affordable for local families in perpetuity. NJ therefore proposed that he would need to build 8 open market houses to balance the cost in

providing these homes for rent. To optimise the good, NJ said he would prefer these open market houses to be principal homes, but would not want to limit them to principal homes (as per St Ives).

Items P and Q would be 3 open market dwellings on land adjoining West Buckland.

NJ referred to the following elements of good shown on the plan:

Item O - a dedicated cycle footpath from Buckland to Bantham and then on the beach

Item K - a children's play area close to the rental houses in Bantham

Item L - a new boat building/restoration yard/joinery which would provide local employment

Item N – land for new village allotments with up to 10 plots, if desired

NJ then moved on to **Item F** - the proposed underground car park, which is located beneath a flexible space (**Items G and H**) that could be tennis courts (with green astroturf surface), a croquet lawn or bowling green. NJ believes this is achievable. This car park would be mainly for residents who would have an option to buy a space. He envisaged that the car park would be used for parking in the summer, so that people had a short walk to their mooring, and that in the winter it would be for the storage of their boats, Bantham boats and ribs. It would cover 3000 sqm and have capacity for about 100 cars; it would alleviate the parking issue in the village and possibly assist the 'pub.

In response to a question about access to the new open market houses in Bantham, NJ said this is shown on the plans but the colours chosen make it difficult to see clearly. Four houses use the existing lane behind the 'pub. Three houses access onto the lane to Buckland, as does the barn conversion.

Proposed development of Zealands Field (drawing no 15/10/SK03 – [click here](#)). NJ then moved on to the development of Zealands Field next to the beach car park. He is aware that archaeology could be an issue on the site. The proposed new cycle/footway goes across the top of the field to the beach, so it is separate from the beach car park accessway. He referred to four existing permissioned caravan sites, one in each corner of the field. The proposed beach club would be sunk into the ground and have a grassed roof. It may have a gym, café and pool. NJ emphasised that he does not want any fixed structures on the beach, but Zealands Field is the entry to the beach and not the beach itself. The toilet block would be refurbished and in addition there would be warm showers. There would be a bigger and newer sewage facility, a better electricity supply and better broadband/mobile connectivity. The Estate owns land adjoining the lane down into Bantham and there would be the opportunity to provide better quality passing places.

In summary, for the public good, he is providing affordable rental homes that are not holiday homes. However, there is a repair deficit on some Estate properties, including the Sloop cottages and West Buckland farmhouse, and that by offering properties at lower rents the Estate is not building a sinking fund for these repairs, such as replacing thatched roofs. He said there needs to be a long-term management plan for the Estate infrastructure and spending.

In response to a question about the membership model for the beach club, NJ said that permanent local residents already get a discount on moorings and he would hope for something similar at the beach club and possibly free of charge at quiet times. He would include all of the Parish and perhaps Bigbury and Aveton Gifford in the definition of local residents for the beach club.

In response to a question about the future of Lower Aunemouth Farm, NJ said that the Estate had taken it back. His aspiration is to holistically farm the Estate on a modest scale, rather than have several tenants. It may still be the main house for the Estate and there may be some development in the future.

Thurlestone (drawing no 15/10/SK04 – [click here](#)). NJ said development in Thurlestone is fractionally more simple, but that there are other stakeholders involved.

Item F – the Steering Group pointed out that this car park is not in Thurlestone Parish. Some discussion followed as to whether or not the car park by Links Court was used by Thurlestone residents.

NJ then turned to his proposals for the land behind the Church. He has been talking to the Golf Club about possible solutions for more land to allow expansion, but has nothing to report at this stage.

Item C – a courtyard development of six family self-catering properties hopefully to be interlinked with the facilities of the hotel.

Item B – a relocated car park for the Church and the freehold would be gifted to the Church, not leased as it is at present.

Item G – the freehold of the Thurlestone Village Shop would be gifted to the Parish Council, if they want it. NJ said it is subject a 999-year lease dating from 1998.

Item H – restoration of the cobbled road near the Church.

Item A – Four open market houses.

Item I – the potential for 5 affordable housing units (as recommended in the Housing Needs Survey). These units are **not shown** on the plan. There would need to be more dialogue to work out what type and where these should be. NJ would be happy to provide the land somewhere in the Parish.

NJ envisaged submitting a joint planning application for the Thurlestone proposals, together with the other interested parties. NJ felt there was no 'up side' in providing holiday homes and that he would negotiate principal residency occupation (but not impose a restriction).

In response to a question about whether there had been any pre-application discussions with SHDC, NJ confirmed there had only been his initial discussions in 2015. NJ agreed this would be a good idea but he would prefer to have some community support before engaging with the planning process. JP advised that it would be a good idea to check with the council sooner rather than later.

NJ explained that it would be difficult to split up his proposals as they comprise one large master/management plan for the Estate and he had discussed a similar plan for Great Tew with that District Council first. He would need to coordinate the plans for funding purposes and that would determine everything. A body of work would have to be done in 3 or 4 years, but it could take 15 years overall. Sequentially, Thurlestone would be first phase as that would release money and could be rolled into bits of good in Bantham. It is a question of balancing money coming in, so as to be able to release money.

AG thanked NJ for his presentation.

NJ concluded by stating that the Neighbourhood Plan is a once in a generation ambitious plan and could be a once in a lifetime opportunity. There may be some aspects that are not liked, but he urges the community

not to lose the chance and not to settle for second best. We can 'have our cake and eat it.' He wants us to be open minded, dynamic and thoughtful.

RM offered Village Voice as another means of communication for NJ.

NJ asked if he would be able to review the Minutes before publication and this was agreed. It was hoped that they would be available on the website in 2 weeks. SC took responsibility for all copies of the plans. NJ agreed to email a copy of his introduction points from the various surveys (included in full above).

NJ, RH, DH, SHW and KB left the meeting at approx 3.30pm.

- 2. Group discussion following the presentation.** There followed a general discussion about the proposals, which it was agreed required further thought. After some discussion concerning the likely press interest, it was agreed that a press statement would be prepared ready for when the Minutes and Estate's plans are posted on the parish website. We would aim to coordinate the timing with the next issue of Village Voice but deadlines are tight, given that NJ must agree the minutes (as per the Locality Guidance about engaging with landowners and developers) and the Village Voice deadline is only a week away (18 January). SC will coordinate and any queries from the press should be directed to her in the first instance.

- 3. Tribute to Peter Hurrell (AG)**

"There have been, very properly, sundry tributes to Peter as a Parish Councillor and leading member of our community, but it is appropriate that we should pay tribute to his contribution to the work of this Steering Group. Peter had an unrivalled knowledge of the history of this parish and area as his wonderful collection of photographs and his recent book prove. But his interest in the past did not prevent him being positive about the future and forward-looking. He was enthusiastic about the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan. Perhaps some of us were not aware of just how much work he did to help with the research and just how helpful his knowledge of the Parish was to us. It is very sad that he will not be around to see the culmination of his and our endeavours. He will be sadly missed and we pay grateful tribute to all that he did for this Group."

- 4. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016** Agreed.

- 5. Matters arising not on the agenda** None.

- 6. Working Group Updates**

DAAT helipad – RM is meeting with the Devon Air Ambulance Trust and local landowners on Friday 13 January to discuss a suitable location for a permanent night landing site.

Non-designated heritage assets – Work is in progress and it is hoped to involve the primary school as part of a local history project. KB is dealing.

Resources – It was agreed to discuss the Bantham Tidal Project at a subsequent meeting. There was general scepticism as to whether this project would be feasible, if only because the proposed location is quite shallow and it is not clear how boats and swimmers would cope.

Economy – GL has prepared a draft for this section of the NP. He has spoken to various people about the rumours concerning the garage but has nothing concrete to report.

Housing – In the absence of a draft JLP and any housing figures, SC is focussing on the NPPF and the strategic policies of the 2006 Local Development Framework. Work is also progressing on the settlement boundaries, which is important given the community support for infill.

Environment – Work needs to be done on ascertaining the best vantage points for photographs of the most valued skylines in the Parish. CM suggested a local photographer and will make an initial approach.

7. Joint Local Plan Update (JP)

JP said the JLP is on track to go before Council prior to the Regulation 19 (final) consultation before submission on 2 March. There is still a lot to do and JP is concerned that some double counting is happening with regard to the number of houses to be built in the villages. She is pursuing this. Almost £1.9 million has been allocated to the South Hams for community-led affordable housing projects as part of a national scheme to recompense areas affected by high levels of second homes. She urged the Steering Group to think of ways to get some of this money into the Parish. JP will arrange a meeting with Alex Rehaag from SHDC to discuss this.

8. Project Plan (SC)

The drafting of the NP is progressing well. JP advised circulating the entire first draft to the Steering Group rather than section by section, as it is easier to see the whole picture that way. SC advised having an NPIERS ‘health check’ before the draft is subject to public consultation and submitted to SHDC. This is to ensure that the NP contributes to sustainable development and meets the basic conditions, as required under the NP legislation. It will highlight any problems sooner rather than later and would be paid for by government funds. NPIERS is the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiners’ Referral Service.

9. AOB

Community Heating - CW is in the course of applying to the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) to pay for a study to be undertaken to investigate the feasibility of a community heating scheme in Thurlestone. RCEF will accept CW as Project Manager and the Steering Group as the Project Team, but requires a constitutional body such as the Parish Council to be on board. CW to pursue. **Community WiFi** – CW has made initial contact with a company willing to look into the provision of a community WiFi network to improve mobile phone reception and is waiting to hear back.

10. Date of next meeting : Wednesday 1st March 2-4pm