

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Held in the Yeo Room, Thurlestone Parish Hall

**Present:** Sue Crowther (Chair) (SC), Jack Rhymes, Sian Williams & Chris White

**Apologies:** Richard Boughton & Graham Gilbert

**In Attendance:** Helen Nathanson (Parish Clerk, Minutes), District Councillor Judy Pearce, Parish Councillors Mitchelmore, Hurrell and Zaffiro, and 9 members of the public

1. The apologies were accepted.
2. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the NPAG on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018.  
The Minutes were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.
3. To consider any matters arising from the Minutes.  
There were no matters arising.
4. To hear the Bantham Estate's plans for a vineyard and associated buildings.

Representatives of the Bantham Estate and Sharpham Wines gave a presentation about their plans. The Bantham Estate had been considering growing its own vines and had consulted with Sharpham Wines about the project. It was then revealed that Sharpham Wines would be leaving Sharpham itself at the request of the Sharpham Estate, which wishes to use the buildings for its own educational purposes. Sharpham Wines is therefore looking for a new site and discussions have been going on between the two parties about a potential joint venture.

This is early days for the discussion and they have not approached SHDC about the planning implications, but wish to obtain a steer from the parish as to what to do next.

The wine making part of the Sharpham business is about 8 people with a mixture of experienced and younger staff all drawn from the local area. Sharpham produces about 70,000 bottles of wine per annum and sells some to trade and some to visitors: it is not a big business comparatively. The vines cover 8 acres.

Photographs were shown of the existing vineyard buildings at Sharpham to illustrate the type and scale of building that would be required. The winery is a converted straw barn. The buildings were never intended as visitor sites, but the interest in English wine was such that people wanted to visit and see how it was made and they have therefore become part of the attraction. Sharpham now takes an educational approach and encourages this interaction, attracting between 12,000 – 15,000 visitors per year, spread fairly evenly across the seasons because it works as an indoor attraction. There is not yet a specified plan for the size and number of buildings that would be required at the new site, though the present arrangement is around 3 smaller buildings, which allows more flexibility over things like temperature control. Both Sharpham and Bantham are in the AONB and they are very aware of the constraints and obligations which this places on any new building.

A question was asked about opportunities for local employment. There will be some because there is often a high turnover in the wine industry of young people who want to learn the trade and need to move around to gain experience and find openings for promotion. It is seen as an accolade to have worked at Sharpham because it is very well thought of in the industry. This vineyard is not very mechanised so there will be a lot of casual labour required at key times of the year.

A question was asked about traffic and when the peak periods are for commercial traffic. Most sales are quite local and to fairly small businesses, some of which will collect in small vans. The larger

vehicle is a 3.5 tonne lorry and this will visit less frequently. There will also be deliveries – spring is the main bottling season and also autumn. At the height of the holiday season in July and August, the traffic will mostly be visitors rather than commercial and is mostly concentrated around weekends for local visitors, though this does not apply to holidaymakers. Visitors tend to arrive after 10.30am and will stay into the early evening if allowed. The operating model for a new site has not really been explored yet but it is the intention to carry on with vineyard tours.

The vineyard should grow quickly and a crop would be expected by the third year, perhaps even the second. There have been no plans yet for a catering offer – at the moment this is just about the winery and vineyard. There are no plans to continue to grow the business in terms of volume: growth to date has been about value and trading up in terms of cost and quality because the Sharpham site has not allowed for physical expansion.

A question was asked about whether the Estate had looked at existing buildings. Yes, but the only ones available are at Lower Aunemouth and these are in constant use, with poor access. Any winery buildings would need to be built from scratch so these would also need to be knocked down and rebuilt. It would also be much easier to have the buildings within the vineyard.

The proposed site was then discussed, which would be three fields to the north of West Buckland, which present the most sheltered site.

At Sharpham there are 30 car parking spaces and the only time this is full is on a Bank Holiday. However, the point was made that there will be more passing traffic in Bantham because there is such a high volume of holiday traffic and that there are likely to be many more visitors.

It was confirmed that the dairy will not be relocating as it is on a different lease.

The land is all under Stewardship so lanes, hedges and boundaries will be protected during any building.

A question was asked about use of pesticides. The main products used are fungicides and Sharpham is not organic.

##### 5. To discuss the Thurlestone Neighbourhood Plan: implementation to date.

A variety of different policies within the Plan are now being tested and SHDC is supporting the Parish in its recommendations. However, Councillor Pearce explained that she is having to fight hard at SHDC because planning officers are not used to the new policies within the NP and it has not been an easy transition.

##### 6. To discuss the Community Led Housing initiative and consider the findings of the Open Forum/Workshop on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019, presented at the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

This was discussed and details about the proposed developments were noted.

The West Buckland site is the favoured one. If planning permission is given the Bantham Estate would sell the land to SHDC and then has no more involvement with the development. The Chair will be meeting with the Estate this week to discuss the details of the Parish proposal and make sure that they will be willing to agree to these terms, including no open market housing.

The North Upton site was discussed and the Chair explained that it would be more difficult to obtain planning permission for this site, because the Joint Local Plan requires the housing to be on sites adjoining or very near to an existing settlement.

She explained that in the case of affordable rentals, these would be owned and managed by a housing association. Before taking this further, it would therefore be necessary to look at the occupation and turnover of the existing 47 affordable rental properties in Thurlestone, which are owned and managed by 4 housing associations.

A question was asked about whether the Community Housing site would be just below the proposed winery and vineyard site. It would, but there will be a gap between the two proposed sites. The applications will be separate and unrelated, even though it is all Bantham Estate land.

The Community Housing at St Ann's Chapel in Bigbury Parish was looked at as a particularly good example of local and sensitive design.

The proposed development does not have a fixed timeline but there is only a set pot of money and it will be important to submit the plans whilst the money is still available: the money is supposed to be allocated to areas where there is a high rate of second homes but it is being spent on areas of the District where this is not so. A realistic timescale is 18 months to 2 years to get the plans through planning.

7. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at 7.30pm.

Sue Crowther  
Chair