



# Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan

## Notes from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017 held at 7.30 pm

**Attendees:** Cllr J Carroll; Christine Clavey; David Gibbons; Cllr Susan Goodchild; Neil Fearn; Cllr K Wattingham; Alan Winter (arrived at 8:10pm).

**Also present:** Martin Small (Planning Consultant); Debbie Marsh (Corporate Services Manager).

**Apologies** were received from Cllr D Abbott; Carol Butler; Cllr M Kennedy; Cllr T McMahon.

**Committee Functions:** The Steering Group were informed that the proposed minor amendments, as recommended by the group at the last meeting, had been agreed by the Planning Committee at its meeting held on the 2nd October 2017 and ratified at full Council at their meeting held on the 9th October 2017. Cllr Carroll asked if the Committee Functions had been updated on the Town Council's website. D Marsh confirmed they had. The revised Committee Functions had been uploaded on to the Town Council's website on the 10th October 2017.

**Re-election of Chair; Vice-Chair; Secretary; Treasurer:** Following the approval of the revised Committee Functions Cllr J Carroll resigned as Chairman of the Steering Group. Cllr Wattingham proposed David Gibbons as Chair, seconded by Cllr S Goodchild. There were no other nominations. All agreed - David Gibbons took the Chair. David Gibbons resigned his position of Vice-Chair. Christine Clavey proposed Neil Fearn as Vice-Chair, seconded by Cllr S Goodchild. There were no other nominations. All agreed, therefore Neil Fearn was duly elected as Vice-Chair. The Chair asked for nominations for the position of Secretary. Cllr K Wattingham nominated Cllr J Carroll as Secretary, seconded by Christine Clavey. There were no other nominations. All agreed, therefore Cllr J Carroll was duly elected as Secretary. The Chair asked for nominations for the position of Treasury. Cllr S Goodchild nominated Christine Clavey, seconded by Cllr J Carroll. There were no other nominations. All agreed, therefore Christine Clavey was duly elected as Treasurer.

**Notes from the previous meeting held on the 26th September 2017:** Under minute heading 'Communication' Cllr S Goodchild felt that all schools should be included and not just secondary schools. It was agreed to remove the word secondary from this section. Christine Clavey requested that the question mark be removed, all agreed. The notes of the previous meeting have now been amended to reflect these changes.

**Funding:** Cllr Wattingham reminded the group that external funding might be available to support the production of the Neighbourhood Plan. Debbie Marsh confirmed the receipt of the information but that she had not had any time to consider the contents. The Steering Groups' Committee Functions state at 8.1 that funding, including grants, will be applied for and held by the Town Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan development work. It was agreed that the Town Council's Planning Committee, at its meeting to be held on the 23rd October 2017, would consider recommending to Town Council that the Town Council apply for external funding. Martin Small suggested to the group that he could provide support, where necessary, in their application.

**Task & Finish Groups:** The Chair asked those who were leading on their preferred topics to update the group on their progress.

- **Housing – Lead Cllr J Carroll**  
Cllr Carroll proposed to arrange a meeting with current developers to seek an overview of the type of housing that was being proposed. Martin Small informed the group that further to the housing White Paper, where the Government set out proposals to tackle the housing challenge, the Department for Communities and Local Government had launched a consultation on proposed changes to planning policy design and legislation. Included within this consultation was a new methodology for calculating housing need. The housing need figure for Central Bedfordshire, that has been generated by this standardised approach, represents a 60% increase on the current housing need calculation. The Group was advised that at Central Bedfordshire Council's Full Council meeting held on 28th September 2017, Members voted unanimously in support of a motion to robustly challenge the proposed new methodology through the consultation process, on the basis that it is neither deliverable nor reasonable. In order to limit the negative implications of this it is now proposed that a timetable that allows for consultation on the next version of the Local Plan in January 2018 and submission of the Local Plan in March 2018 be pursued.
- **Town Centre – Lead David Gibbons**  
David informed the group that contact had been made with two business owners, located in Bedford Square who were interested in being part of the Task and Finish group. Attempts will continue to try to engage with the landlord.
- **Business & Employment – Lead Christine Clavey**  
Christine asked the group if a map was available showing the parish boundaries that she could present to people. Christine was proposing to attend a business briefing at the Disability Resource Centre and well as making contact with employability people. Martin Small directed the group to the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the map that was included within it. Whilst the draft plan was not a public document, merely a starting point the map was accurate.  
**\*Chair requested that Debbie send a copy of the draft plan to the Steering Group members.**  
Alan Winter joined the meeting.
- **Open Spaces – Lead Neil Fearn**  
Neil informed the group that he and Chris Chew were looking to produce a questionnaire to include, age bracket, gender, what open spaces people currently use, if people travel outside Houghton Regis what do they travel out for. Neil explained that he had looked at an adjacent Town to see what facilities they had and what open spaces were there. Questions were raised as to how the questionnaire could be distributed. Christine suggested contacting Sports England and Team Beds Luton, in case they could assist. Martin advised the group that there were national standards regarding, for example sports pitches per size of population.  
**\*Martin to send information to Neil.**  
**\*Cllr Carroll to send colour coded map of the Town Council's open spaces.**
- **Heritage – Lead Cllr T McMahon**  
Debbie Marsh informed the group that Cllr McMahon had requested she put her forward as lead for this Task & Finish group, in her absence.
- **Education – Vacant.**  
Cllr S Goodchild said that she would be happy to support the group/lead but was unable due to current commitments to undertake any additional work.

The Chair reminded the group to document who and how they have tried to get people involved. Document who has been approached, show they had been asked and given the opportunity to be involved.

**\*The Chair asked all if they could provide names of those who they felt could lead on the Education Task & Finish Group and give them to him within the week.** David said he would be happy to approach them on behalf of the group but that is someone was known to others personally then that may be better. They could be appointed by consensus with the group ratifying the appointment at the next meeting.

**Communication:** Various ideas were suggested as ways of engaging with local people:

- Specific Facebook page
- Notice boards
- Banners
- Town Crier
- Parish Magazine
- Posters (with blank date spaces)
- Local schools
- Youth Council
- Youth Groups
- Town Council website

It was agreed that to start to promote the Neighbourhood Plan Task and Finish Groups some members of the group would set themselves up at the Craft and Coffee event on the 25th November 2017. Debbie suggested the group either borrow or purchase some portable display boards that could then be left in situ in various locations around Town i.e. Church's, Heritage Centre, Community Centres. **\*Debbie to gather quotes and submit a request to Planning to support a recommendation to Town Council for the approval to purchase portable display boards.**

Martin suggested a common questionnaire be provided.

**SWOT forms:** Members of the group had all received their blank SWOT forms. The Group were advised that more were available if required.

**Updates/Ideas:** The group were encouraged by the Chair to keep the ideas coming.

**Date of next meeting:** Date of the next meeting to be held at the council offices on Wednesday 15th November 2017 at 6.30pm. Martin asked for his apologies to be noted as he would not be able to attend.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm