

Minutes of the “Droitwich Spa Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group”

Meeting held at 10.30am on 2 November 2022

Venue - St Richards House Council Chamber

Persons attending – Councillor GR Brookes – (Leader of the Town Council & Designated Elected Member with responsibility for NHP matters including communication & liaison).

- Dr David Nicholson – Appointed Consultant
- Mr Paul Jones
- Mark Keld – Town Clerk

Apologies were received from Andy Ford (WDC Planning) Mr Michael Howard and Councillor AM Sinton.

General

Progress with the project was summarised by the Town Clerk and the consensus of opinion was noted that matters were proceeding well. The Agenda had been noted in advance for discussion of the following key points.

1. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group.
2. SWDPR overview and Publication Consultation Phase (Regulation 19).
3. Brief overview of the two Technical Support Teams Meeting that had taken place with Aecom since the first Steering Group Meeting on 23rd August (Design Codes on 5th September and Housing Needs Assessment on 3rd October).
4. Evidence Base – Review of Document produced by Consultant October 2022.
5. Consultation and Communication Strategy.

1. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group.

The suggested draft provided by David from material sourced as used by Herefordshire Councils was reviewed in its entirety. As the Statutory Body for the NHP project, The Town Council does not have to maintain terms of reference for the Steering Group but it was agreed that it was proper & correct due diligence to maintain such a standard. In general discussion it was suggested that a simple and not overly complicated, focused and fit for purpose set of Terms of Reference would be best suited for this project. The previous project and connected Steering Group had a terms of reference which was never mutually agreed and did not clearly determine the working remit between the Group and the Qualifying Body (the Town Council). This had been a contributory factor in the breaking down of the working relationship and as such the interruption to any tangible progress- before leading to the project suspension in September 2018.

Using the Herefordshire Councils version as a template the attached draft was agreed to be put forward for considered adoption. This would form part of the next Full Council update on the Nhp project and progress scheduled for 12th December 2022.

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2. SWDPR overview and Publication Consultation Phase (Regulation 19).

The Clerk updated that arrangements were being finalised for the Town council to facilitate and host an open public consultation meeting at the Community Hall on Monday 21st November 2022 at 6.00pm. This would be a collaboration with Wychavon District Council as the Statutory Planning Authority and enable residents the opportunity to receive a presentation covering the SWDPR Concept and the details for the proposals within the Droitwich Spa Parish area. The format will be a welcome and introductions from Councillor Bob Brookes in his capacity as the Leader of The Town Council and Chairman of the Town Council Planning Committee. Thereafter WDC officers would provide the presentation and take focused questions and answers. Those attending will be encouraged to submit their consultation responses using the preferred digital link means (or paper forms if preferred) within the SWDPR six weeks consultation running from 1st November to 13th December 2022. Following the public open meeting the Town Council will consider a corporate consultation response overall as part of the next scheduled DSTC Planning Committee Meeting on 5th December 2022. Press and media notices for the 21st November public meeting are being arranged for release week commencing 7th November to provide two weeks advance coverage and notice.

It was noted that Andy Ford could not make today’s meeting but he had acknowledged the points that David wished to discuss at an early opportunity through the Clerk separately. It was agreed for the Clerk to suggest facilitating a separate meeting with Andy and David in due course. The main points to be clarified further are the proposed housing requirement allocations within the presented SWDPR. The figure of 376 for Droitwich Spa could present issues with the available land supply for suitable sites to accommodate this number, similar to other high allocations in the consultation – for example Warndon Villages Worcester.

3. General Update on Project and anticipated stages of progress

The Clerk briefly updated on the two Aecom Teams Meetings that had taken place during August and October as previously notified and documented.

The Town Council website provider is scheduled for a meeting on 4th November to review options for the web page and specifically to enable Nhp project content to be uploaded. It is likely that the website will undergo a general update and archiving of content in order to provide additional capacity. In general discussion the provision of a heading tab on the Home page for the Nhp and then within three sub tabs for- reference documents, working documents and consultation aspects. The work will most likely entail a proposal to Council in December for authorisation prior to the changes and start of content uploading. The capacity to link to an online survey option (e.g Survey Monkey) was considered an important aspect to support the forthcoming wider consultation work.

David confirmed that part NP1 for the Evidence Base package is now completed. Part NP2 for the Questionnaire Survey will need consideration for a Communications Strategy. In general discussion it was suggested that this could be recommended through David and delegated for him to take forward with the Clerk at a separate meeting. A provisional timescale of late November was discussed to meet to undertake this task. The Communications Strategy preparation will be additional costed work from the proposal accepted from David for the Nhp overall and charged at the hourly rate. Part NP3 for Site Assessment work will proceed through David during January and February 2023. See also point 5 below for Consultation and Communication Strategy.

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4. Evidence Base

David presented the Evidence Base document. This covers a summary of existing evidence for the Nhp in three categories of National, County (with SWDPR) and Local (Town area).

The WDC Town Centre prospectus is an important supporting document especially on transport connectivity, business and commerce.

The SWDPR section contains a substantial amount of information. It was noted that the initial impression is that the river corridor between the River Salwarpe and the Canal (the land crescent leading north of the Town Centre) has a lot of features – including Heritage aspects, ancient monument status parts, business & commerce presence and traffic/transport infrastructure. This makes for a busy area with some constraints for development.

For National Level evidence the data taken originates from the last available census in 2011. More up to date data is expected to be available from December 2022 from the 2021 census gathering of information.

In terms of the Housing requirements overall the Evidence Base has taken the SWDPR total figure of 376

Under local evidence there is insight from the District Planning Authority (WDC), the original Town Plan (now rather dated but still relevant for some aspects). The 2022 Town Centre Prospectus and Conservation Area aspects.

The qualifying period for the Nhp project is set as 2041 to align with the SWDPR proposals.

5. Consultation and Communication Strategy

As mentioned previously and noted under these meeting notes point 3. A Communications Strategy is to be drafted with David’s guidance later in November and using examples from peer Council NHP projects (e.g Ledbury). Details will be provided in due course.

Arrangements for the next meeting to be confirmed. Likely scheduling for January 2023.

Meeting Closed 12.15pm

Mark Keld

7th November 2022