

Minutes of the “Droitwich Spa Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group” Meeting held at 10.30am on 24 August 2023 (Meeting Number 6).

Venue - St Richards House Council Chamber

Persons attending – Councillor GR Brookes – Steering Group Chairman. (Designated Elected Member with responsibility for NDP matters - including Communication, Liaison & the Steering Group).

- Dr David Nicholson – Appointed Consultant
- Councillor George Duffy – Leader of the Town Council and Chairman of DSTC Planning Committee
- Mrs Lyn Blewitt – representing Droitwich Spa Civic Society
- Mr John Armstrong
- Mr Bill Moy
- Mr Michael Howard
- Miss Gemma Ranford – WDC Place Board Officer
- Katy Prew – Deputy Town Clerk (Community & Amenities)
- Mark Keld – Town Clerk

1. Apologies for absence were noted from Mr Paul Jones, Andy Ford – (Wychavon Planning Department) & Mr Mike Meredith (Civic Society),

2. To consider the draft Minutes of the last Meeting of the NDP Steering Group (Meeting Number 5) from 27 July 2023. The draft had been circulated with the Agenda papers. The minutes were accepted and noted for publication on the web page with no amendments raised.

3. Launch Event Consultation Results Report March and April 2023 - To note the Report that had been produced by David and circulated in advance of the meeting with the Agenda papers. David updated that there were several emerging themes in the feedback responses including the local housing needs, suitable sites for development and infrastructure provision. These are all important aspects which have influenced the content and questions for the wider resident’s questionnaire scheduled for October consultation. There were no specific questions arising for the Report and it was agreed by consensus to publish the March/ April Results Report on the web site.

4. Community Questionnaire (version2) – incorporating amendments agreed at the Steering Group Meeting on 27 July 2023. – The updated questionnaire was presented having been circulated in advance of the meeting. In general discussion the following further changes were agreed by consensus,

- (a) Introductory sentence wording for Flyer Letter – “With the Droitwich Spa community, the Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan – to better influence development and deliver on your priorities”.
- (b) Final sentence wording for Flyer Letter - “I look forward to hearing from you to help deliver on your priorities and Plan for your Neighbourhood”.
- (c) Question 4 & 10 amended to “restoration & redevelopment of the Raven”, from just “restoration”- which was considered to be potentially misleading. Lyn qualified that the Wychavon District Council - Conservation Policy also aligns on this point which is included within the listed building planning consent for the Raven Site.
- (d) Question 11 for the Netherwich Canal Basin - John raised that it was important for the land use options to include leisure and business references. Wording amended to – “Provide retail and leisure facilities on the Canal-side”

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- (e) Bill raised points regarding ongoing issues in the Community with the roll out of Broad Band infrastructure. David clarified that this would not have any real influence through the NDP, and by consensus it was agreed to remove the question on Broad Band speeds from the questionnaire. This was agreed for the reason that the question could possibly be interpreted to be misrepresentative and/or raise expectations.

It was further updated that the Flyer Letter will be dated October and the consultation survey end date will be 31st October 2023. The Flyer Letter may enable the option for a background picture or embellishment – subject to costs and formatting. It was agreed that if viable this should be representative of Civic Pride, for example an image of St Richards House. The QR Code and Survey Monkey link will need to be incorporated with the Flyer Letter ready for printing.

5. The Site Assessment Report

David summarised that the Site Assessments considered three principles – availability, suitability and whether achievable (economically viable). Sites considered included those designated in the SWDP and those identified within the SWDPR and the Wychavon District Council – Investment Prospectus.

The Union Lane site (400 units) was taken as an example from the SWDPR and Prospectus (not SWDP) which is impacted by viability issues requiring further clarification. A meeting is being arranged between David, The Clerk and Andy Ford at WDC during the next month or so to take forward and clarify many of the viability points for all of the different sites.

It was agreed that a map be produced to help determine the location of town centre sites of archaeological interest and a link with a supporting archaeological policy and heritage statement for the NDP. Lyn mentioned that the Civic Society may have access to the National Heritage Monuments Archive by way of assistance.

- 6. **Neighbourhood Area Map** - The updated map was noted and confirmed as replacing the previous edition from 2012. David clarified that for the purpose of the consultation the red line boundary for the area was not considered to be wholly prescriptive – in that comment was encouraged from people residing, working and doing business in Droitwich Spa.

7. Agreement of Next Steps for Community and Business /Commerce Questionnaires –

The Clerk updated that the business questionnaire would be circulated through the Place Board and Wychavon comm’s as agreed with Gemma at the June Steering Group Meeting. This would be an online only survey. For the Residents questionnaire arrangements were in hand with Royal Mail distribution to deliver the 15 - 16K printed A5 double sided Flyer Letters to all WR9 residential addresses. The cost for the distribution is £1048 and 4 weeks delivery notice is required for the stock to be taken to the Distributor at Swindon. Printing is expected to be finalised weeks commencing 29th August 7th September by way of final preparations. The basic cost for printing is £372. A value of £1300 has been secured as part of the Locality Grant Funding 2023/24 towards the distribution and printing costs.

The anticipation is that the Flyer Letter will sign- post and encourage residents to complete and submit online digital feedback responses. This will be collated using the Survey Monkey function embedded within the Town Council website www.droitwichspa.gov.uk. The Flyer will incorporate a URL link for survey monkey and a QR code. The Survey Monkey existing arrangement is cost free but restricted in capacity for the number of featured questions and expected online responses. To this effect it is necessary to upgrade the Survey Monkey function to an annual subscription with a cost of £384 effective from 4th September 2023. The option is included for paper printed questionnaires to be available. These are to be accessed at desk displays with return delivery boxes located at the library building and St Richards House (Heritage Centre) through October.

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8. Project Funding Update – The Clerk updated that the locality funding had been announced, applied for, granted and received during August. The Maximum eligibility of £10K for the period 2023/2024 had been awarded comprising £8700 in professional fees scope and £1300 towards the consultation work (printing and despatch). This is considered positive news and helps maintain a cost effective and well balanced financial approach to the NDP project as a whole. It was noted that the awarded grant has to be expended or returned by 31st March 2024 and that any further funding for the period 2024/2025 will be subject to confirmation for availability by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in due course.

Next Steering Group Meeting date agreed to be confirmed in due course for later November / December 2023 in order to align with the questionnaire results and feedback. The day, time and location of a Thursday at 10.30am in the same venue – St Richards House Council Chamber was agreed to be the most suitable option. Confirmed date and Agenda to follow.

Meeting Closed 11.50 am

Mark Keld

30.08.2023