

NDO STEERING GROUP

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.00 pm, February 18, 2016

Present: Steve Hepworth (Chair), Alex Oliver, Tom Griffiths, John Dunford, Jonathan Young, Michael Golden, Charles Reiss.¹ Apologies: Ben Owen, Robert Carpenter Turner

010/16 **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising not on the agenda: none

011/16 **Neighbourhood Development Order, general update:** Jonathan Young reported that Sarah Hughes of Wiltshire Council planning department has been appointed as Link Officer in place of David King. In a phone conversation with David Milton, also of Wiltshire planning, JY had received no clear answer as to why the NDO had not been registered, nor why the council had still given no opinion as to whether the proposed development was acceptable in principle. Members agreed to seek a meeting with Ms Hughes as soon as possible to try to move forward on those points and also if possible to resolve the conflicting advice from the council on the choice between an NDO and an orthodox planning application. Members took note of the assurance given by David Milton in an email that in the event of a planning application strong local support for the proposal would be a material consideration. Tom Griffiths said that HAB would have no problem using the planning application route. Alex Oliver again raised the concern that an NDO would give the Parish Council "minimal" control over the detail of any development; other members agreed.

012/16 **HAB update:** Tom Griffiths reported a meeting with Wiltshire Council to discuss the proportion of affordable housing on the site. The council had proposed 40% though he believed there was some flexibility. That proportion would mean some nine affordable dwellings out of a total 20 to 25. The example currently in mind was 23 houses.

013/16 **NDO grant:** Mike Golden reported that a grant of £1,500 had been approved. That was less than the full amount applied for because the money needed to be spent by March 31. There would need to be a fresh application for the remainder. Agreed that MG contact Debby Lester, Responsible Finance Officer for the Parish Council, to place the money in a separate account alongside parish funds. Members voiced

¹ Voting members: S Hepworth, R Carpenter Turner, B Owen, A Oliver, C Reiss, M Golden

concern that problems could arise if the grant was spent on a planning consultant but the NDO was then abandoned. Agreed that before any final commitment an assurance be secured, in writing, that the grant would not need to be repayable.

014/16 Villages questionnaire: Charles Reiss reported on the survey across the parish on the future of the sawmill site, the results of which will be available on the parish website. He stressed that it was very much an initial exercise to seek opinion at an early stage while options were still wide open. Opinions could well change as more information became available. About 65% of questionnaires had been completed and returned. They showed a clear preference for housing or a mixed development on the site, rather than continued industrial use. But they also showed two very strong concerns: "overdevelopment" on one hand and dereliction on the other. CR also pointed out that the 23 houses suggested by HAB was seriously out of line with the much smaller number most residents were prepared to accept.

015/16 Viability of the existing sawmill: Jonathan Young said that the existing business was not considered to be viable as a going concern. Asked about the extent to which it had been advertised, he said there had been no advertising. One other timber business had been approached but had not been interested. Several members voiced surprise. Steve Hepworth said he had understood that both the business and the site had been advertised. Charles Reiss said that he had been left with the same impression and that, as a result, information had been published on the website and elsewhere which now appeared to be misleading. John Dunford said that the sawmill had been sited because of the canal. Nowadays it would need to be near a motorway.

016/16 Next steps: Members voiced concern over the continuing lack of clarity of the process and the continued inconsistency of the advice on offer from Wiltshire Council. CR said he was still not convinced that the NDO gave the parish enough control. That needed clarifying, if possible, with John Slater, the proposed Parish Council planning consultant. Agreed that an SG meeting be scheduled for March 1 or 2 with John Slater and Sarah Hughes invited to attend. Alex Oliver noted that on a recent visit by SG members to the House of Commons Claire Perry MP had suggested she might intervene. However it was felt that at this stage it would be more appropriate to involve our local councillor, Paul Oatway. Emma Therese Lewis, a Honeystreet resident, speaking with the consent of the chairman said there was a sense the Parish Council had been speaking to the developers and not to the residents. After discussion it was agreed that the Parish Council be asked to organise a village meeting to follow the next coffee

morning on March 5. It should also be stressed on the website that all Steering Group meetings are open to the public.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.37.