

Notes of Open Space and Recreation Needs Group 24 February 2015

Present :

WCC : Steve Opacic (SO), Stuart Dunbar-Dempsey

Cllrs : Stuart McCullouch (Chairman) (SM), Stephen Pinch, Roy Gentry, Margot Power, Lisa Griffiths, Barbara Holyoame (Member of National Parks and Parish Councillor for Bramdean & Hinton Ampner).

Residents : Jan Field, Ralph Pointer (RP), Bob Fowler, Keith Barratt (KB), Janet Barker, John Weston, Anabela Williams, Sam Kerr-Smiley, Ingrid Fry, Barbara Piper, Brian Durham.

1. Volunteer to take notes :

Lisa Griffiths volunteered and accepted in absence of any other notetaker.

2. Apologies :

Cllrs : Barbara Jeffs, Ernie Jeffs (WCC)

Residents : Heather Burke, Richard Chatwin

3. Notes of the last meeting :

Janet Barker (JB) raised the point that Jan Field had believed there was more than one meeting of the previous Needs Group, however she had found she was mistaken. JB also thanked Stuart McCullouch for his input.

The notes were accepted as a fair record of the meeting of the 27 January 2015.

4. Actions from last meeting. The names of those who attended the original Needs Group. SM had only been able to establish that the following attended the original meeting :

James Prowse
Barry Aked
Vic and Sue Prior
Barry Cope
Ralph Pointer
Marilyn Weston
Barbara Holyome
Brian Tippet
Richard Chatwin
Jan Field
Sam Kerr-Smiley
Keith Barrett

5. Verbal report from NATC meeting 12 Feb 15:

SM reported on the last Town Council meeting saying that there was one slight amendment to the request and that was that, instead of requesting WCC to remove the original report from the website, there be a note added to the website to the effect that due to the population changes this and other needs groups reports may be revised. This has duly been actioned by WCC. All other resolutions remained as proposed.

Sam Kerr-Smiley stated that he was disappointed that the other resolutions on the Local Plan were not passed.

Janet Barker stated that she and others are disenchanted at the conduct of the past meeting of the Needs Groups.

6. Results of engagement with WCC including the applicability of the National Planning Policy Framework and inclusion of land outside parish boundaries in Open Space Strategy Schedules.

Bob Fowler (BF) suggested using the NPPF extract as guidance for defining the space. Steve Opacic (SO) explained that the NPPF was used to form Policy CP7.

At this point, Roy Gentry (RG) asked BF if he was recording the meeting. He confirmed he was and attendees were asked if anyone objected. No one did.

BF said NPPF definition is wider and includes areas of water and other important opportunities for sport, etc, including visual amenity. He also mentioned PPG17 which is dated 24/7/2002. SO responded that PPG17 was superseded by NPPF so the Local Plan is a more specific policy to WCC, to make open spaces protected and visual amenities can be included.

Stuart Dunbar Dempsey (SDD) added that green infrastructure implications had been reviewed. WCC had consultant studies conducted to formulate Policy CP7 for Local Plan Part 1 which looked at the range of open space types. It had been concluded that this has to be quite selective otherwise it would be drawing in everything, so is slightly narrowed definition, but does not include long distance footpaths or cemeteries.

Janet Barker asked who decides what is included. SO said the open space definition is that if an open space is making a substantial contribution to the character and appearance of settlements it should be included as an amenity. JB asked if BF was happy with that. BF responded that when Alresford Local Plan goes forward he does not understand why the Inspector will not be looking at NPPF as opposed to what is in WCC standard – is that standard (Local Plan?) immutable? SO stated they had to address the standards set in NPPF so CP7 is the policy for Winchester accepted and agreed by the Inspector in LPP1. BF continued that WCC do not include some of the areas in the NPPF, such as visual amenity to be protected, whereas there are areas no longer used for mainstream activities and so are now excluded. (For example, the Alresford Pond is

privately owned and was previously used for fishing, so previously was publicly accessible but is no longer in public use.)

SM said he thought it would be a good idea if the NG used WCC schedule (as opposed to, say, the Assessment document, to assess the land/amenities to see how they fit into the Open Space & Recreation definitions and that this would then be the “document of record” for discussions between NATC, the NG and WCC. SO said that he would concur with that.

SDD said the Alresford Schedule is sent to The Clerk annually for review so it is not a definitive document but to be reviewed and updated over time as required.

SM suggested that each year perhaps the Recreation Committee should review the report, or perhaps a forum like the Needs Group should also contribute to the review of the report.

JB asked the difference between recreation and visual amenity which residents want to protect, and also how residents secure protection. SDD said distinguishing open spaces that are useable falls under 6 categories: play areas, informal green spaces, natural green areas, parks, recreation and sports pitches. Areas may make a contribution to the settlement, such as The Avenue, as they contribute to the character and appearance of the town. However, whether Mitford Road Roundabout contributes is more debatable.

JB asked about the area bordering the on the ford (Spring Lane) as it sustains various forms of wildlife and is never cultivated. **Sam Kerr-Smiley (SKS) commented that he believed this is already listed as an SSSI but he will check and confirm.** If land is not publicly accessible it is unlikely to be classified; land needs to be publicly accessible. SO explained that how we protect is through the definitions in Local Plan, whether for recreation or open space. Inclusion or exclusion is on the basis of one of those categories. SDD said the focus is on spaces within and within reach of the edge of settlements.

Barbara Piper asked about ecological view of the field to the East of Sun Lane, in respect of skylarks which are in severe decline. SKS said that Natural England recognise that there are various potential development sites around Alresford and wherever the development occurs, there will be wildlife to be protected.

To clarify, CP7 sets out quantities that should be provided and also recognise certain access standards, saying access should ideally not be further than 700m from the settlement. Barbara Holyoame queried adjoining land and National Parks access being included with the need to avoid double counting land. SDD said they are in conversation with National Parks to ensure that does not happen.

In order to assess accessibility SDD draws catchment lines around open space and it quickly can be seen where there are gaps in provision. Natural England do a similar concept which they recommend be achieved as much as possible.

SDD said the measurement is taken from the edge of the settlement boundary and there is not an obligation to provide open space that close to homes. Keith Barrett commented that Hursley has Farley Mount which provides a very disproportionately large area of open space compared to Alresford. RG said that Alresford is unique in being a very small Parish, unlike Old Alresford and Northington, we are a rarity rather than the norm.

SO said that the Open Space Strategy is a more up to date document. When the original report was prepared, we were looking at calculating on the population numbers and requirement for spaces. BF asked "schedule" clarification – this is p39/40 of the Open Spaces Strategy with publication date of September 2014 and has explanation of definitions used. SDD agreed that it will need to be reviewed. Open Space Strategy is listed on the website as evidence and is background document for the Local Plan. WCC will also need to take into account comments from the consultation.

SM said the Group needs to develop, review and agree the document for Open Spaces.

SDD said the introduction to the Open Spaces Strategy defines the categories. Ralph Pointer asked if it is important that we get the definitions correct. SO said yes, it is necessary to be correct and has to be consistent across the Winchester District – WCC will need to check for consistency.

SM said the Group can add to that Open Space Strategy document and will need to meet to discuss categorisation of land, by which time hopefully the NG would have the space measurements of those additional areas already notified. SDD said there must be a lower size limit for recreation spaces/play areas which is 100 sq m (for visualisation purposes that is approx. twice the size of the lower meeting room at ARC) to avoid verges and unusable areas being included. SM said that the concept of "protection" is to protect land from the risk of being built on. BP referred to page 11 of the Agenda and Papers for the meeting which listed WCC's criteria inclusion of areas in Open Spaces in the Schedule and says that they can be any size. SM said that although land may not count in the open spaces figure, it can qualify to be protected instead.

There was a discussion over Windermere Gardens where there is an area of open space with seat/plants/tree. The area is small but is felt to be an amenity space. Margot Power said this would qualify as land to be protected. SO explained that (on Page 40 of the Open Spaces Strategy) there are columns for recording the reason that areas are considered to be important, whereas previously it did not have any classification and it allows WCC to explain to anyone who queries the decision for classification.

Sun Hill Junior playing fields – WCC have queried whether to include school playing fields, however they felt these playing fields should be mapped although they are not what we would class as publicly accessible. The reasoning behind this is an earlier Inspectors decision in Denmead where it was concluded that the school playing fields were serving the needs of a certain section of the community.

RG said that in LPP1 a minimum standard of 4 ha/1,000 population was set but what was included in the definition is unclear.

Margot Power said she did not think the junior school playing fields to be publicly accessible. Background papers to LPP1 emphasised the for local authorities to to talk to the school in question to find out how much use the public will get. SDD has contacted Winchester schools for that purpose. It was stated that Perins have written to WCC to request that their land no longer be protected.

SM asked if the area of a particular site could/should be scaled to account for the public only having access for a certain amount of time, giving a commentary to explain the reasoning. RP further supported this with regard to Alresford Rugby Club wanting pitches when the school pitches are inadequate. Further, the large number of teams fielded by the school means that at times they are using Winchester Rugby Club pitches. In addition the tennis courts are reportedly in poor condition.

SDD stated that quantity, accessibility and quality are key decision making points. The standards that the Local Authority provides that the distinction needs to be made between what is a minimum standard and what the local community requirement is (not necessarily one and the same).

SM questioned whether public access has to be free of charge. SDD said payment does not rule an amenity out. **The inclusion of the bowling green however needs to be explored as this cannot be hired for use by anyone so it is not publicly accessible.** RG said that if Perins is included it makes a significant difference to whether Alresford has a shortfall. SM asked if open space can be protected if it is perceived we have too much open space land and do not need more; perhaps a developer may say we have more than required and they can then build on protected/open space as it is surplus to requirement. SDD said NPPF Clause 74 says that open spaces should be protected unless an assessment has been undertaken (Open Space Assessment) which clearly shows open space that is surplus to requirement. SO added that if we stated that we need more than the minimum standard we would need to state why that is the case.

7. Work Programme

SM said that the NG should be conscious of the fact that in June/July – WCC are due to issue a pre submission version of the LPP2. This would be followed by formal consultation on whether LPP2 is sound.

The next stage is a summary and analysis of the consultation responses to go to WCC Committee for discussion on 30/3/15 to set out any further work to be undertaken to support the pre-submission paper. Any revised needs from Alresford must be submitted in time for this session. SO suggested 9/3/15 is the latest date for submitting paperwork to SO. **(Post meeting note : SO has agreed NATC can submit population change comments by 13/3/15 as needs to be approved at Full Council which is not until 12/3/15.)** The error in the population figure can be quite easily defined, however SO said we need to agree what land counts towards the various categories.

In the revised report we would bring in shortage of football pitches.

Is the requirement for circa 20 ha? SO said we need to plan for how we can meet any shortfall and are trying to set a target for negotiations with developers when that time comes. KB said there was a requirement stated in the original needs report but that requirement is not compulsory to fulfil the shortfall, only desirable. RG said we can only insist on meeting what is required as the standard for the new housing. RP questioned if we can prove we need more sports field than open space, is that permissible.

JB said she wrote to Steve O by email on 26 November 2012 stating that she believed the original plan presented by Councillors Gentry and Power would be imposed on and that they would produce needs Reports without any genuine consultation. Mr Opacic replied on 7 December: "there should be adequate control to ensure that 'unsound' proposals are not adapted into planning policy but I do maintain concerns that the Town Council is continuing to consider 'solutions' without having first assessed the 'problems/issues'". Thanks to KB and BF's persistence in requesting that NATC reopened the Needs Groups, she said, it is clear, especially in the case of this group, that no genuine consultation took place.. JB said that she is not happy and that it is her view that, in the knowledge of the demonstrably flawed process, it is not ethical for credible that Mr Opacic would submit the original reports which would render the plan unsound.

SDD will quantify and include any space which has been suggested for inclusion in the New Alresford Schedule to the Open Spaces Strategy to assess their contribution. MP has already provided SDD with the list and photographs of areas to be assessed. SKS was dismayed that she had done this and seemed to be taking over without the Needs Group having an opportunity to comment on the merits of the submission. SDD said thanks to MP putting work in he has been able to do some initial work, looking at the spaces and using his professional judgement to decide if the spaces contribute significantly, whether useable as well as an amenity space.

BF suggested that the land known as Hassock's Copse (far side of golf course) be included on the schedule. River walks need to be assessed for inclusion.

SDD will send the spreadsheet to SM in order for him to assess with others or the whole Group as necessary what areas should be included in the Schedule. SM will aim to respond to SDD by close of play tomorrow. SDD will look at providing measurements and classification applicability to SM by weekend.

SM will visit Perins to review facilities and potential for inclusion.

SM suggested that the priority on the work programme was to assess the areas on the Schedule, including additions suggested since the reconvening of the NG, so as to provide to WCC in time for inclusion in their preparation of the pre-submission version of LPP2 a view of what recreation and open space in New Alresford should be protected, what should be regarded as currently provided and what therefore needed to be additionally provided in the period covered by the plan. He further suggested that the Group should next meet on 2 March 2015 to focus on these questions. Other items on the work programme could then be addressed in slightly slower time.

Next meeting : Monday 2 March – 7.30 pm