

CUMNOR PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group
held in the Garden Room, United Reformed Church, Leys Road, Cumnor
on Thursday 16 May 2019 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Kathy Davies, Ted Mott, Fiona Newton (CPC), Tim Pottle, Dianne Rees, Judy Roberts (CPC), Chris Scruby and Chris Westcott.

52/19 Election of Chairperson. Fiona Newton was elected as Chairperson. It was agreed that a Chairperson would be elected at each meeting.

53/19 Apologies for Absence. Nicholas Cole and Julia Richardson (CPC). These apologies were received. Apologies also from the Clerk, Tina Brock.

54/19 Declarations of Interests. None.

55/19 Minutes of the Meeting of Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group held on Monday 16 April 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chairperson.

56/19 Matters Arising from these minutes. None.

57/19 Variance of Order of Business. None.

58/19 Local Green Spaces (LGS).

Report on follow-up. The Local Green Spaces Working Group had photographed and documented 61 green spaces. The shortlisted 35 sites that met the criteria to be put forward for consultation in the Parish for Local Green Space Designation were again reviewed. The Meeting recommended excluding school fields so as not to handicap their development options. 23 final sites have had detailed descriptions and Google maps. The Meeting was informed that a landlord in the village ward did not wish to have their field designated as a green space. A draft report had been distributed to the Steering Group.

Important Views: Lepus Consulting had produced a map of the green spaces and the important views within the parish. The Meeting noted that viewpoints external to or on the edge of the Parish, i.e. looking into or reciprocal views, were as important as the views looking out. The Meeting noted that the criteria for the selection of special views needed to meet public policy as to their “significance”. In this context the Meeting observed how many developers can skilfully position new constructions to avoid constraints, since views are “dynamic” and vary with the exact position of the viewer. Private views have no rights, but views from public rights of way do have rights. Other considerations were addressed with regard to wildlife sites and common land.

- i. Draft letter to Landlords regarding designating their land as a green space. The Group agreed that the draft letter needed to be amended slightly and was conscious of the sensitivities involved.
- ii. Identification of unknown green spaces to be identified following the review of LGS between Fiona Newton and Tim Pottle.

Action. A few areas needed their ownership checked and TM agreed to consult owners in the Village Ward. FN to provide a map for guidance during these discussions. TM to contact 2 landowners to ask whether they wish to have land that they own designated as LGS. FN to send map and letter to TM for land parcels “ridge & furrow field” and “Open land at Cumnor Place, Cumnor Village”

FN to review important views and liaise with lepus to redraw map. FN and CW to describe views and add to LGS Draft Report.

Greenbelt considerations: The Meeting reflected further on the renewed initiative of government to use Greenbelt land for housing, noting that a major thrust was to extend existing villages. It was understood that the population of Oxfordshire would grow from its present circa 600,000 to 800,000 by 2030, but would grow to 1.2m if the OxCam Expressway and Arc were progressed. The Meeting noted that “conservation areas” offered a good degree of protection and that being a designated “green space” was also helpful. The Meeting was of a unanimous opinion that Cumnor, given its 463 dwellings, and reduction in shops and bus service should no longer be categorised as a

“large village”.

59/19 Business Survey.

FN had sent 64 questionnaires to local businesses and received 12 responses, about 20%. There were no surprises, but good evidence is still required. The Meeting noted the changes in lifestyle resulting from the internet and how far more people today, as opposed to say 2010, were working in service industry roles from home offices. Whilst there may not be many businesses in Cumnor there appeared to be considerable locally based employment. The Meeting noted that the population of businesses could also be estimated by the change in the number of dwellings paying Council Tax.

Action: Chris Scruby will kindly draft a short report about the research findings.

60/19 Polices and Rationale.

The chairman noted the progress made in drafting Policies and their rationale, thanking all contributors, and invited the Meeting to progress to a consensus on the texts. This Meeting concentrated on Design & Built Character and New Residential Development guidelines. As a general point it was agreed that Care Homes would be categorised as residential and not as businesses.

Criteria for Design & Build: the Meeting considered the difference between sites which may be of local interest and those which have a particular quality or significance which merits a greater degree of “listing”. Sites may include buildings, structures or even spaces and can include unlisted buildings. The “heritage landscape” in the Parish was also considered, involving sites and land modified by man over the centuries. These might include for example ridge and furrow fields, granaries, monuments or old alehouses. The question is how best to capture the historical knowledge which validates their significance. The Meeting felt it important to consult further with Cumnor citizens on this question: “Which buildings and spaces are important to you, and why?”

Actions: Kathy Davies to draft an email of the questions, and these can be emailed out to our current distribution list of 11+ people for nominations. Chris Scruby to ask Martin Harris for his insights.

DBCI focus: The Meeting again considered back-land development, the impact of which it felt was not adequately analysed by planners. The definition of “in-filling” was not sufficient. The Meeting concluded that the onus should be on developers and their architects to prove that their proposal meets the Parish’s Character Assessment criteria. Failing this, the default position of the Parish is that back-land development is henceforth inappropriate. This would then align and support para 70 in the NPPF.

The Meeting reflected on the notions of “rural” vs. “suburban”. It was pointed out that these notions refer to Large Housing Developments. The Meeting was reminded that Cumnor already has delivered 514 new houses, since 2011, a 23% increase. The Meeting then considered again the need for a “balanced” housing policy which enabled the delivery of both low-cost affordable housing and simpler housing for the elderly. Not everyone needs or wants 2-3 bedrooms nor a garden. Over the next 10 years there will be greater demand for flats and low maintenance accommodation. Some of this may be well-served by multiple accommodations in modest high rise of 2 storeys. The Meeting agreed that a harmonious community required a mix of accommodation to suit the needs of various age and income groups. In future, developers must show how their designs are informed by the study of the Character. The Meeting reflected on how slightly higher rise buildings could be positioned to exploit the contours, i.e. to benefit from the clever use of slopes. Further, the Meeting noted the “Creative & Innovative” aspects of design & build to meet goals of carbon neutrality, renewable energy or quality of living.

DBC3, 4 and 5 focus: DR talked of a “light bulb moment” noting that the Vale had produced an excellent paper about Low Density and Rural Housing, showing how this is matching and reinforcing the policies anywhere in the Parish of Cumnor. This paper provides an opportunity for the NPG to integrate or to “grand-father” earlier public policies into our forward-looking Plan Policies. These link with the Character Assessment to maintain the low-density character of the Parish. The Parish is distinctly rural, and the community wishes to maintain this character. The Meeting deliberated on how best to link this assertion with the Principles.

Action: DR to reflect further. FN to develop definition of Lower density with ref to Vale Design Guide and add to policy.

RES1 focus: New Residential Development

The Meeting noted that the purpose of RES1 is to build on the footprint of old rural cottages but with suitable modern design which complies with the Character Assessment. The Meeting wishes however to remove any positive encouragement for a rush to build on older sites.

RES2 focus: Residential Mix and Standards

As referenced earlier, back-land development will be discouraged, in line with the NPPF, despite the fact that any developer can always try to make a case in exceptional circumstances. The Meeting noted how obfuscation can so easily emerge as residents convert garages to habitation or garden studios to dwellings.

Again, the Meeting considered the importance of having “affordable housing” in the overall mix. The ratio of affordable to normal was considered and whilst some urban areas such as Oxford have a 50% affordable mix, it was concluded that the policy should be worded “affordable housing should be delivered in developments of 2 or more dwellings”

61/19 Any Other Matters. None.

62/19 Date of Next Meeting. To be advised.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Signed.....

Date.....2019