

Notes for meeting of Neighbourhood Planning Working Party on Mon 8th April

1. To recall the notes of the meeting on 18th Feb:

DN suggested that the priorities were as follows:

- ☑ Landscape capacity assessment (identifying what is important to whom and why)
- ☑ Draw up some sort of project document
- ☑ Review funding availability e.g. locality money and also Malvern ANOB

Action:

NF and IJ agreed to start work on the first two of these bullet points.

PH undertook to start looking at funding.

Ledbury Design Guide

- ☑ This needs to be part of the plan rather than an appendix.

It was agreed that Paul Neep, the author of the original document, should be contacted and asked if he would be prepared to help again.

Action:

NS to make contact with Paul Neep

Other points:

- ☑ Policies deleted by the examiner need to be reviewed.
- ☑ All policies will need evidence in their support.

2. An outline project document

This is attached as a Nicola's draft schedule (or 'tick list') of aims and objectives covering the project envisaged. This indicates that a significant amount of work will be involved and it will need to maintain a momentum once started. A major part of this is simply communication – whether with the Town Council and Herefordshire CC, or the community in Ledbury. The key to a successful plan is Council and community ownership and interest – dare one suggest enthusiasm for it? For this we need a greater recruitment (on an ad-hoc basis) from Councillors and other volunteers with a wide spread of interest and knowledge. Their interest may be reduced by the thought of joining Committees, so it could be small home-based working groups for specific subjects.

This will need good project management and co-ordination with milestones to measure progress.

We have not attempted to flesh out any work needed on the Design Guide as it is not clear why this did not form a valid part of the submitted Plan and it appears to be fairly comprehensive, but it will need reviewing with the passage of time and benefit of comparison with e.g. Wellington Heath's successful efforts. To meet the question - why do we need it? - should help produce the evidence and justification for such a document and the policies arising being included.

Likewise the town's approach to Green Infrastructure issues and targets, where we probably lack direction at present. The NPPF seems to emphasise that all development needs to be able to demonstrate viability and this subject is no exception. Too often good schemes of this nature are put in place and then simply neglected for lack of funding or any plan for on-going maintenance.

3. Landscape capacity assessment

‘To start work’ means having an objective. This is fairly clear – to resolve the settlement boundary by the means of research and consultation.

Ian has prepared a draft briefing paper outlining the possible route for achieving this objective by means of a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment project, as ably put forward by Carly Tinker. This does not mean the whole has to be outsourced to a consultant, as a considerable amount of work on an assessment of the landscape was undertaken in 2013-2015 concerning e.g. all the SHLAA sites surrounding the town. This work can be revised and supplemented with evidence gained from the historic and physical assessment outlined by Carly and in Ian’s paper.

However, it is felt that this assessment should not be difficult once we are pointed in the right direction. A carefully focussed and disciplined approach by the WP members and other volunteers should be capable of producing satisfactory evidence. They will need to be guided, reviewed, and the results hopefully endorsed by a retained consultant (Carly did confess to being heavily committed elsewhere but may be able to help). This should lead to consultation with the community on the options thus identified within 12 months and a conclusion within 18 months, subject to the following review procedure. We will need help (especially in presentation of the results) from professionals, using their experience and expertise in an economic manner.

The intent should be to stimulate discussion and comparison in consultation, by offering options for the possible boundary. The NPPF as revised in 2019 gives strong guidance that suggests we must not repeat the error of using the Settlement Boundary to restrict development, but have logical and well founded reasons for what we include – and exclude. In particular, while we should include land sufficient to meet **not less than** the Core Strategy housing objective of 800 units, including valid permissions, we may have valid reasons for limiting the boundary if other projected housing is well in excess of this broad figure and prejudices other considerations, e.g. infrastructure, public services and other uses.

It is clear we may include land that could (or should) be developed for other infrastructure or non-housing uses, such as employment or recreation areas available for general community use. This may require a separate ‘bubble’ of settlement in close proximity to the main areas. At present these subjects have been largely ignored in the NDP yet were of considerable concern arising from public consultation. The main land identified in a vague manner for e.g. employment off the Little Marcle Road would appear to be either in the ownership of Heineken and simply not available, or at risk of possible flooding and in use for sports pitches. Employment needs require evidence and this will not be generated without a positive scheme to bring this land forward for development. It is generally known that at least one local employer would like to expand/consolidate operations, if the opportunity could be facilitated.