

Minutes Tavistock NDP Steering Group Meeting

Wednesday 22nd May 2024 5.30pm

Tavistock Town Council Chamber

Steering Group members attending

Ursula Mann, Cllr & Chair

Trevor Munro, Cllr (attending after first hour), Stuart Honey, Secretary, Dr Sharon Gedye (SFHEA), Kit Harbottle, Gemma Loving (attending the first hour), Ian Wright

Visitor attending

Stuart Todd, Project Manager

Apologies

Janna Sanders, BID Manager

Sue Spackman

This evening's meeting was the opportunity for the steering group to consider the comments and questions arising from responses of individual local community residents and interested stakeholder organisations as part of Reg. 14 consultation process, together with our project manager Stuart Todd.

There were a number of decisions to be voted on, to confirm positions for TNDPSG to take in response to Reg 14. responses – see below 2/.

Once again, we would like to thank Stuart for his continuing meticulous work and invaluable support.

1/ Design Guide responses – GL

GL collated and managed the responses concerning the design guide and these were reviewed by ST.

ACTION: GL to review any wording of any particular points on topics raised in consultation with ST. In addition, images to illustrate the design guide, may be added to the final plan: e.g. views and solar panels.

ACTION: SG unanimously agreed for GL to contact Simon Hargreaves from AECOM who produced the Design Guide to see if amendments can be made as suggested by Reg 14 responses. AECOM have noted that any edits of the guide may be subject to charge dependent on the amount and time needed for any amendments.

**Locality NP Facilitation Grants became available for application after the meeting and an application to amend the design guide with a facilitation grant was submitted on 26/05/24 along with an application for some of the costs related to the project management fees for submitting the plan to WDBC.*

2/ Reg 14 Consultation responses ST and SG

The bulk of the meeting was spent extensively reviewing each written Reg 14 response with ST.

In general, the group agreed that the focus should be on getting the plan 'made' in order that the plan's policies apply to any future development in the parish, rather than try to integrate additional policies which would require further consultation and delay the adoption of the NDP.

The responses and changes to plan will be collated by the SG ahead of the next meeting see 3/. The chair had prepared a spreadsheet for the group which, thanks to Town Council staff, ran to only 17 pages of A3 which was used as the basis for discussion.

The Steering Group had also sought advice from the WDBC Neighbourhood Planning team following the Reg 14 consultation on any significant issues raised through the consultation. These were answered via email on the day of the meeting and the response was read and discussed by the group prior to deciding how to move forward on the various issues below.

The following significant points raised by the consultation, requiring a specific response which will be drafted as part of the main response to the Reg 14 Consultation, needed majority agreement from SG and therefore are minuted here:

a. Taking into consideration written comments from WDBC and advice from ST the following two points were voted on by SG:

i. Affordable Housing – Unanimously voted not to do a call for sites for affordable housing in the plan. In the discussion the following points were raised:

- National planning law does not require the group to allocate land for development in addition to land allocated in the local plan and the steering group has considered but previously decided not to make any additional land allocations in the plan.
- There would be additional unknown costs both in time and expense if a call for sites was made as the plan would have to go back through Reg 14 consultation. This expense would have to be met through the parish precept (tax payer funding) because the grants for the NDP had already been applied for and used for the work completed to date.
- The Joint Local Plan already provides a mechanism for additional affordable housing to come forward through exception sites.
- The NDP in HOU1 encourages community led and charitable housing developments for local affordable housing solutions that directly meet the needs of local people.
- Existing JLP housing allocations, which include affordable housing and employment land, have not yet been fully delivered.
- The JLP has recently been reviewed and there is currently a 5 year land supply which protects the parish from speculative or unsustainable development.
- Allocating additional affordable housing sites does not prevent additional market housing from being allocated to the parish by the local planning authority in future.

- The steering group had many responses at all stages of consultation indicating that residents feel that until infrastructure to support additional housing has been provided, allocating land for development beyond that already allocated in the JLP, even for affordable housing, was not supported by the community.
- Often, land allocation is the most emotive and divisive issue within a neighbourhood planning area, even where it is absolutely clear that allocation is required. Examples of plans that never came into force were discussed.
- The other policies in the plan, when 'made' will apply to any speculative planning applications and carry statutory weight and this will be a significant improvement over the current situation, in which there is no local policy being applied.
- After the NDP is 'Made' the Town Council may, at any time, review the plan if there is evidence of a need for additional land allocations for housing or employment land for development.
- The planning laws change regularly and are likely to change following the upcoming general election, however, if the NDP is 'made' it will apply until the JLP is no longer in force which is 2034.

ii. Settlement Boundary – Unanimously voted not to add a defined settlement boundary to the plan. In the discussion the following points were raised:

- The steering group has previously discussed defining a settlement boundary several times and decided not to adopt one.
- There would be additional unknown costs both in time and expense if a settlement boundary were adopted now, as the plan would need to go back through Reg 14 consultation. This expense would have to be met through the parish precept (tax payer funding) because the grants for the NDP have already been applied for and used for the work completed to date.
- The steering group has received advice that the settlement boundary proposed for the JLP in 2017 could not simply be adopted without an updated evidence base and process.
- A settlement boundary can provide clarity around where development isn't allowed, but also provide additional pressure and possible overdevelopment within the boundary or at the edge of boundary.
- The JLP already allows planners to support sustainable development and prevent unsustainable development outside the settlement boundary with recent decisions cited as examples.
- Other areas (see Cornwall Council) are moving away from hard settlement boundaries because they encourage development only at the edge of a boundary rather than in appropriate locations outside of the boundary.
- After the NDP is 'Made', the Steering Group can suggest that the Town Council monitor planning decisions regarding development at the edge or outside the main settlement in the parish to ensure that the JLP is providing adequate protection.
- The Town Council may review the 'made' plan at any time in order to adopt a settlement boundary if there is evidence that it is needed.

b. Local bus funding – Unanimously agreed that TNDP should not propose that developers make mandatory Section 106 contributions for funding a local bus service. In the discussion the following points were raised:

- Section 106 contributions cover a variety of infrastructure needs arising from new development and are limited in amount based on viability constraints of the developer. Therefore, allocating a portion to a particular cause will necessarily limit the amount available for other causes.
- Devon County Council is the authority tasked with identifying necessary contributions for public transport.
- The local planning authority, not the neighbourhood plan steering group, negotiates Section 106 with the developer.
- Local bus services funded by development contributions are vulnerable to being stopped as a result of a lack of sustainable funding.
- Bus services are a very important form of public transport and they should be funded and maintained by Devon County Council as a priority in their own right rather than through market-based housing development.

c. Green Hill, green space designation – SG agreed by majority vote to withdraw the privately-owned land forming a portion of the Green Hill LGS designation where the landowner was objecting to the designation. However, the minority view noted concern about protecting biodiversity within the parish. This decision is consistent with all other requests from private landowners who objected to the inclusion of their land in the plan as a local green space designation. This is also consistent with the decisions that ST has seen from planning inspectors recently.

d. Other privately-held land designations: There were two other designations (one green space and one heritage local list) where a landowner had objected and these were unanimously agreed to be excluded from the plan.

e. The steering group has ongoing conversations with additional parties regarding changes that are being integrated following the consultation, specifically with regard to the housing, community, transport and heritage sections of the plan. The SG will continue to refine these ideas until the final responses have been collated as per /3 below.

3/ Reg 14 consultation response admin work

ACTION: final work to catalogue and collate Reg 14 responses by June 12th 2024 meeting will be undertaken by Sharon Gedye, Kit Harbottle and Ian Wright.

4/ The next meeting will be held on Wednesday June 12th 2024, 6.30pm, Tavistock Town Council Chamber

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9.15pm