**Minutes of a meeting of Newbury’s Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group**

**Held via Zoom**

**27/01/2022 at 7:00pm/19:00**

**Present:**

**Newbury’s NDP Steering Group:**

1. Newbury Town Council (NTC): Councillors Nigel Foot (Chairperson), Martin Colston, Vaughan Miller (Joint Project Manager), Gary Norman, and Martha Vickers
2. Members of the public: Ian Blake, Paul Millard, Anthony Pick, Louise Sturgess, and Kim Whysall-Hammond (Joint Project Manager)

**Other Attendees:**

Jeremy Flawn (Bluestone Planning) and Darius Zarazel (NDP Secretary and Democratic Services Officer, Newbury Town Council)

**16. Apologies**

Apologies received from John Brownell and Councillor David Marsh.

Jeremy Flawn left the meeting at 19:30

**17. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**18. Minutes**

**Proposed:** Anthony Pick

**Seconded:** Councillor Martha Vickers

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting of the NDP Steering Group held on 27/01/2022, be approved.

**19. Election of a Deputy-Chairperson for the Steering Group**

**Proposed:** Councillor Martha Vickers

**Seconded:** Anthony Pick

**Resolved:** That Louise Sturgess be elected as Deputy-Chairperson for the NDP Steering Group.

**20. The NDP Project Plan**

The next steps for the Steering Group were:

* Vision: A paragraph stating the aspirational desire of the NDP and what will be discuss (both for the Plan and the Town) going forward.
* Objectives: Will include several key topics and some detail per topic.

Drafting both the Vision and Objectives normally takes 1 – 2 meetings.

Drafting the questionnaire may take another 1 – 2 meetings.

The Questionnaire consultation could be up to 4 weeks.

**21. The NDP Vision and Objectives**

The Steering Group discussed the potential Vision for Newbury’s NDP as well as some of the Objective’s it would have.

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| Steering Group Member | What the Members most like about Newbury | What the Members are most concerned about in Newbury |
| Kim Whysall-Hammond | It’s very friendly, great place to raise children, and has great access to parks and open countryside. | The loss of local independent shops, the age range of people in Newbury (the lack of 20 – 35-year-olds), and the increasing number of retirement flats in the town. |
| Cllr Martin Colston | The Town Centre heritage and feel of the marketplace and Northbrook Street, Canal and Parks, and that everything is walkable/cyclable. | The Town Centre needs pedestrianisation, there needs to be an increase in active travel, the planning standards not enforcing sufficient sustainability measures, the waste of use of the Wharf, and the lack of links from Victoria Park to the Town Centre. |
| Paul Millard | The schools and ease of raising children, leading community hospital, and mixed entertainment venues. | The proposed profile of the Eagle Quatre redevelopment, the local eyesores (BT Tower), the access to healthcare, the shop mix is lacking (needs more small shops), the Wharf has potential but mostly underutilised, and the lack of broad involvement in cultural activities (make it more like the Edinburgh Fringe Festival?). |
| Cllr Nigel Foot | The Character of the Town, that it is surrounded by easily accessible countryside, and the blue spaces (Canal and river). | The proposed height of buildings in the Town Centre, the traffic issues in Town Centre as well as the pollution it causes (better traffic flow as a solution), the A339 being a barrier to East-West active travel, and the housing mix (lots of flats but not much housing). |
| Anthony Pick | The variety of architectural styles, the establishment of the University Centre at Newbury College, the gateway roads into Newbury’s Garden suburbs, and the strong sense of Newbury’s own cultural and historic identity. | Several eyesores (the BT Tower and several shopfronts on Bartholomew Street for example), a lack of architectural understanding about Newbury’s culture, the open spaces being converted into housing developments, and the poor East-West road linkages. |
| Louise Sturgess | The independent shops and eateries, parks and green spaces, and the marketplace and its historic surroundings. | The lack of facilities for young people, the Highstreet losing vibrancy with empty units, the mix of shops is lacking, and the high cost of accommodation. |
| Ian Blake | The well-connected transport (trains and road network) and the larger Newbury Businesses (Newbury Racecourse, Brewery, etc). | Need more focus on people living in the Town Centre (want to avoid the dormitory effect). Loss of big employers from the Town (mixed use development and high-density family housing may be a solution.) Developments and Newbury’s heritage are not joined. The public realm needs to be used better (how people use and occupy spaces around buildings). |
| Cllr Gary Norman | Newbury’s national identifiers (Newbury Racecourse etc), the Towns connection to history (Civil War etc), and the scale of the Town (important as the town grows larger that it remains a friendly place). | There is an inappropriate focus on certain developments (commuter/retirement flats), the lack of leisure facilities generally but specifically for young people, and the high cost of accommodation. |
| Cllr Vaughan Miller | The location and accessibility to the rest of the country, access to the countryside for walking and cycling, and the number and quality of free cultural events (festival of lights etc). | The new large-scale developments, the lack of artisan shops, wasteful use of the Kennet Centre, and leisure activities for young people. |
| Cllr Martha Vickers | The canal and the joy of walking into town, having a market and being a market town, the friendliness and connections between people, and the cultural offer. | Concerns about viability of independent shops and facilities for young people. |
| John Brownell | The Market | Affordable housing and car parking for market days and in the evenings |

Some items discussed that could go into the Vision and Objectives were:

* The Wharf is wasted as a car park
* Increasing standards for new developments (EV charging points, inclusion of street trees, carbon neutral or net gain)
* Addressing developments climate impact/increasing climate resilience
* The pedestrianisation of the Town Centre
* Improving the walking environment (improvement of pavements, signage, pedestrian lights, and so on)
* Increasing access to health care (a centre per number of houses) and an NHS dentists
* Shifting the dwelling mix (houses versus flats and social and affordable)
* Keeping the Town vibrant and not a dormitory Town (mix of retail, leisure, and residential)
* Addressing traffic issues
* Including open and green spaces in the Town and in developments
* Increasing the Towns cultural and leisure facilities (especially for young people) as well as a sporting/cultural hub
* Promoting heritage (through an adequate Conservation Area Appraisal)
* Attracting new business (starting incubator and accelerator hubs)
* Promoting co-working spaces
* Increasing the quality of neighbourhoods (the 15-minute neighbourhoods)
* Petition for revision of permitted development rights
* Better bus services (more frequent and cheaper)
* Free parking to encourage footfall in Town Centre

It was noted that all NDP policies need to be land use-based policies within the functions of a Planning Authority. In addition, long-term policies, such as site allocations, have been ruled out by the NTC Planning & Highways Committee NDP Report.

**22. Forward Work Programme**

It was agreed to add the following items to the Forward Work Programme for the NDP Steering Group:

* The next meeting of the Steering Group will be the formulation of the Vision and Objectives.
* Each member was tasked with drafting a potential Vision statement from the items discussed above in preparation for the next meeting.

**23. To fix the date of the next meeting**

The next meetings were agreed to be held on 08/02/2022 and 22/02/2022 at 7:00pm/19:00 via Zoom.

**There being no other business, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 20:50 hrs.**