

<p align="center"><b>EXBOURNE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Minutes of monthly meeting held in the Village Hall on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018</b></p>
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Present:

Adam Hedley (AH)    Sally Kenealy (SK)    Gaye Langham (GL)    Kirk England (KE)  
Michael Brady (MB)

**Action**

1	<p><b>Apologies:</b> Sally Hordern, Dorothy Gennard</p>	
2	<p><b>Public speaking</b></p> <p>KE addressed the Group in his capacity as the owner of Coombe House, whose orchard has been nominated for designation as a Local Green Space ('LGS') in the Neighbourhood Plan ('NP'):</p> <p><i>"We've planted over 30 trees and many meters of native hedging. We've spent many hours tending the old fruit trees - to keep them alive and healthy for as long as possible. We don't want to build on the orchard. But the LGS designation proposed for Coombe House Orchard has serious implications for us. It will restrict any planning applications - as does Important Open Space. For example – we want to bury our gas tank. We can't as it's classed as engineering work and needs planning.</i></p> <p><i>We only have a small area – the terrace behind our house - that's classed as garden. The orchard is agricultural in planning terms, so we can't officially use the orchard as garden. If we did that we risk complaints to the planning department. We are restricted in applying for any change of use.</i></p> <p><i>What we want to be able to do is have some of the orchard as garden and create some parking – roughly the area that's hard standing at the moment. It's an idea that I've talked to the Parish Council about and had preliminary conversations with West Devon Borough Council about. Those have been supportive.</i></p> <p><i>We believe that there are strong arguments why Coombe House Orchard doesn't meet the strict criteria for LGS set out in the National Planning Practice Framework. Previous NP decisions on this show that the bar is set high when it comes to land that privately owned, with no public access, no rights of way, no significant wildlife etc. The hedges and trees that we have planted will also change how the orchard is perceived over time, in that less and less of it will be visible from the road.</i></p> <p><i>But what is the NP trying to achieve? If the hope is that the orchard will stay exactly as it is or was when the Clarkes owned it – that's not going to happen, as we own it now. If it's about protecting it from development – that's possible without the whole area being classified as LGS. If the Group is happy to compromise on exactly where the line is drawn, then we won't object to the classification of part of the orchard as LGS. We would actively support it.</i></p> <p><i>But if the Group goes ahead with the whole area being classed as LGS then we would object, and our arguments would be strong. Then, the risk exists that the whole area loses the protection that's in place at the moment. If the Group persists in trying to classify the whole orchard as LGS - we would be forced to object. Not because we intend to build on it, although that's what people will think. For us; people who care about the environment and are actually replanting a traditional orchard, that's really upsetting. We don't want to be pushed into a position where we are fighting the designation, when a compromise that keeps everyone happy is possible.</i></p>	

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	<p><i>The classification has serious and far reaching implications as a landowner, we'd like the Group to give consideration to the idea of redrawing the LGS line at Coombe Orchard, to allow us an opportunity to apply for some garden and parking ... and for the Group to get its designation to protect the orchard for generations to come."</i></p> <p>AH said that he completely understood KE's position and admitted that not much attention had been given to the boundaries of the nominated LGS sites on the map displayed at the Community Consultation Day. In general, the areas presented were either those suggested by the nominee or followed the outline of the relevant green area shown on an Ordnance Survey map. This was clearly a mistake as it had evidently upset some of the landowners. AH explained that this was precisely this sort of issue that he hoped landowners would raise when they were consulted on proposed designations in due course. The Group agreed that they would be open to reasonable suggestions such as that proposed by KE, especially in cases where the landowner was willing to work positively with the Group and secure an enduring asset for the community.</p>	
3	<p><b>Evidence base</b></p> <p><u>Site Allocation</u></p> <p>AH reported that there was a new Neighbourhood Planning Officer at West Devon Borough Council ('WDBC') called Duncan Smith. AH had asked for his feedback on the Group's work so far in relation to its site assessments and to advise on the next steps required for making a site allocation in the NP.</p> <p>There was some discussion as to whether a range of sites should be considered for allocation, perhaps allowing for an order of preference. However, it was generally agreed by the Group that there would be a significant risk of not receiving the necessary majority backing for the NP itself if it included development sites that did not have the support of the community. Therefore, in the event suitable viable sites could not be found, the NP would instead need to allow development to be principally market-driven but include general policies to enable areas of land outside of the settlement boundary to have a good degree of policy protection against development coming forward in locations which the community and evidence suggests would be inappropriate.</p> <p>AH explained he had arranged to meet Duncan Smith on 13 June, when he hoped to receive further advice on this subject.</p> <p><u>Local Green Spaces</u></p> <p>Following the complaint the Group had received from a landowner at the last meeting, AH explained that he had also written to WDBC to seek their reassurance that the approach the Group had adopted in relation to LGS assessment and landowner consultation was appropriate and consistent with other neighbourhood plans. Duncan Smith had been forwarded this correspondence on his appointment and wanted to discuss it further at the meeting on 13 June. Given this delay and following recommendations of the Parish Council, AH agreed to draft an email to landowners explaining the LGS assessment process in greater detail. This would include an outline of the National Planning Policy Framework criteria under which nominated sites would be assessed and a reassurance that landowners would be consulted in due course. However, landowners would be advised that the Group feels such consultation would be premature (and waste their time in many cases) without</p>	AH

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	<p>first preparing a draft report for discussion which has been reviewed and commented on by WDBC.</p> <p>GL advised that she still needed to write the “local character and context” section of the LGS assessment report and hoped to have a complete draft by the end of July. AH asked that she give him the work she has done so far so that he could start amalgamating it into a professional report format.</p> <p><u>Local Visual Landscape Study</u></p> <p>In DG’s absence this subject was deferred to the next meeting.</p>	<b>GL/AH</b>
4	<p><b>Plan and policy</b></p> <p>The Group agreed that the next step for developing policy further was to provide Stuart Todd with its feedback and comments in relation to the draft “policy intents” he had prepared for the NP. AH agreed to draft an email for discussion.</p>	<b>AH</b>
5	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>AH reminded the Group that it would need additional finance to pay for further advice from Stuart Todd or other external parties. He explained that the grant funding available for neighbourhood plans was now slightly more flexible and generous, which was good news. Unfortunately, the application process remained onerous but AH agreed to begin preparing a budget and application for the Group’s next round of funding.</p>	<b>AH</b>
6	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>MB explained that he was in correspondence with Natural England in relation to the procedure required for an area to be given the status of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (‘AONB’). In particular, MB considers that the valleys of the Okement &amp; Torridge to the West and the Taw to the East should be afforded AONB designation.</p> <p>MB explained that the designation and assessment process requires external stakeholder support and lengthy consultation and Natural England have a significant number of designation projects that are already in line to be reviewed. Given budgetary and resource restraints, these are likely to take many years to move through the system. Despite this, MB proposed that the NP could perhaps identify areas of the countryside within the parish that might be considered for possible future AONB designation.</p> <p>AH considered that any NP policy in this area was unlikely to be possible and was generally concerned that any such proposal would have had no form of public consultation. That said, he agreed to ask Stuart Todd whether it might be feasible to raise this matter as a potential aspiration in the wider NP text.</p>	<b>AH</b>
7	<p><b>Next meeting</b></p> <p>Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018, 7:30pm in the Burrow.</p>	<b>ALL</b>

**IF YOU ARE READING THESE MINUTES AND INTERESTED IN JOINING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP, OR MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROUP’S WORK, THEN PLEASE CONTACT ADAM HEDLEY ON 851648**