

Emberton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
(A sub committee of Emberton Parish Council)
Minutes of Meeting held virtually – 26th May 2020

Present: Jason Bevan- Chairman
 Joe Walker
 Melanie Duncan
 Fred Markland
 Virginia Tierney

Peter Geary – Ward Councillor
 Chris Akrill – Town Planning Service
 Karen Goss – Clerk to EPC

1. **Introductions Apologies for Absence** – Introductions were made. There were no Apologies for Absence.
2. **Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman** – It was proposed by Joe, seconded by Melanie and unanimously agreed that Jason be appointed Chairman. The meeting continued with Jason in the Chair. It was proposed by Melanie, seconded by Virginia and unanimously agreed that Joe be appointed Vice Chairman.
3. **Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda** - There were no Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda.
4. **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 17th December 2019** – The Minutes of the previous Meeting held on the 17th December were agreed. It was noted that most of the new committee members were not present at the meeting
5. **Public comments, questions or representations** – There were no members of the public present.
6. **To approve the Terms of Reference** – It was proposed by Joe, seconded by Melanie and unanimously agreed that the Terms of Reference dated May 2020 be adopted.
7. **Update on steps take so far** – Chris reported that the Article 14 submission started on the 24th February and was due to finish on the 9th April. The deadline had been extended by two further weeks due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The group were then instructed by MKC to halt the consultation. There would be no decisions on the neighbourhood plan until next May when the referendum would take place and it was unsure whether this situation would change when things improved. Castlethorpe had got their plan to Regulation 16.

There were a few residents that attended the consultation event and the subsequent questionnaires received (9) indicated that there were some queries regarding housing allocation. The question was did the group want to adjust the plan for less impact or stay the course? Peter had commented that there wasn't a level of housing need. The

vision of the original plan was to revitalise the village and bring more people in. The plan would be relatively easy to review.

Chris touched on the grant for the plan stating that the amount received so far had covered off the plan, the basic condition statement and consultation statement so these were the three main areas that needed to be covered.

Peter confirmed that there wouldn't be any referendums until May 2021 but the group needed to be ready for that and there were quite a lot of stages to go through. Jason asked the opinion of the group. Melanie stated that she would be happier, given that the housing allocation had already been met to have less of a controversial plan and passed at referendum in order to protect Emberton.

Melanie asked if the school site would come forward. Chris responded that it had been put forward by MKC when the school was going to close. If the school site came forward, there could possibly be the opportunity for village parking. Jason asked about ownership of the school field. Chris commented that Andy McGrandle who used to sit on the steering group had been looking into this as the school was gifted from a trust. The doubt was that it might not be MKC's to sell. Chris stated that whilst the group were approached by the development company on behalf of MKC, they did not put anything forward. Peter stated that the problem would be the covenant on the site.

Joe asked if the previous steering group had ascertained a level of housing development that would sustain the village. Chris responded that the initial questionnaire identified that most people supported 10-20 houses.

Peter gave some background information on affordable housing and stated that affordable housing for Emberton would be fine if it was managed right. Peter stated that the group would have to work with the land owner in advance of the plan being submitted; one thing was to make sure that affordable housing was for the people of Emberton and not MK.

Chris stated that in the light of discussions, the HNA probably needed to be reviewed. Virginia questioned the questionnaire response on housing numbers. Karen confirmed that 28% of those responding had indicated that 1-10 houses would be acceptable and 25.5% of those responding had indicated that 11-20 houses would be acceptable. It was noted that there were 111 responses. Virginia stated that she did not believe that more houses would lead to the school opening as the school did not offer the wrap around care required by working parents that some of the other schools such as Olney offered. Peter commented that if the village did not have a five year housing supply, you did not have a secure boundary. A neighbourhood plan was important as it gave the village protection but it didn't mean that you had to build a huge number of houses.

A discussion took place regarding incremental development. Peter responded that one of the problems of allocating any land is that it would be built on and anyone that owned the land would immediately support development on it. The neighbourhood plan needed to be refreshed every three years. Chris responded that refreshing the plan didn't mean that it had to be re-written. Fred stated that the school field site had been in and out of the settlement boundary for the last three years; if the group thinks it is sensible, it should be put in. Chris commented that it

was difficult to control windfall development because it was unexpected. If the settlement boundary was extended to include some back gardens, some people might consider development schemes and bring them forward and these would be hard to resist. Housing delivery in the village had been very slow with only a few dwellings per annum. Jason asked if a delivery number per year could be identified in the plan. Chris responded that housing numbers should be positively expressed such as “at least” and “more than”.

Chris stated that the other option that could be considered was re-running the call for sites to see what comes forward.

Virginia asked whether 2 or 3 sites could be allocated which need not necessarily be developed at the same time. Fred asked how other local parishes had allocated housing in their neighbourhood plans. Chris responded that Lavendon took a small allocation of 8 so that the plan delivered on small scale housing and a windfall management approach. The site came forward during the call for sites. Fred stated that Emberton did not get these sort of sites coming forward. Chris responded that the majority of the sites were from the other side of A509. In the main part of the village most of the sites put forward were in West Lane which had difficulty gaining access to and were not supported by highways.

Jason asked about Field 13. Melanie asked if there would be a stream of applications from properties in Newport Road and Prospect Place that had large gardens. Chris responded that this could be the case; the steering group could decide to reflect on the settlement boundary and drop it back in. If the steering group changed course, the vision statement would have to be adjusted. Melanie stated that when the steering group were looking at more housing it was because there was a lack of people coming forward to sit on committees and help out in the village. The volunteering spirit that had recently been evident during the Covid 19 pandemic was probably a good thing and building 40 houses was possible not required any more. Fred responded that he agreed with this comment and that there could possibly be a future where more people got involved and the group needed to be careful how the village extended.

Virginia asked about traffic in the village and had there been any thoughts of a one way system? Karen responded that this option was discussed when the Traffic Orders were made for the restricted access and it was not approved by the bus company.

Chris commented that when the group started on the plan, the pub and the school were still open and there was an appreciation that the population of the village were aging and a question was raised of how did the group allow the village to thrive in the future. These ambitions needed to be reflected upon. Jason stated that he felt there was a real community spirit in Emberton and it was a case of trying to tap into it. It was agreed that Karen would speak to Andy McGrandle to ascertain the conclusion of the discussion on the school field. Melanie to have a look at the documents. **Action MD/KG**

It was agreed that the new committee would look at existing work undertaken by the previous steering group which might mean looking at the other sites put forward as a starting point. Chris commented that the HNA needed to have a refresh.

Chris stated that now the school had closed, the vision statement would need amending.

Chris commented that the other issue was the settlement boundary, would it be extended and where to? As a group, we need to look at it and decide a way forward. Fred responded that the group were reasonably clear on the strategy; to draw a line around the properties that had already been developed rather than running through the middle of the property or garden. The only other area was the school field. Jason stated that could these gardens not be developed previously? Chris responded that the settlement boundary ran through residential curtilages. Melanie asked about adjoining sites. Chris responded that anything outside the settlement boundary would be open countryside. Jason stated that the action for the next meeting would be to agree the settlement boundary.

Virginia asked if the group could have access to the Lavendon Neighbourhood Plan. Chris responded that he had a good idea of what it contained. Peter stated that the Ravenstone plan was also a good one.

Chris asked the group if there was anything that wasn't in the plan that it would like to see in the plan? Virginia responded that a safer crossing on the A509 to link both sides to the village would be good. Fred stated that perhaps looking at a shortfall of facilities and uses of other facilities. Peter commented that how the group could get affordable housing for Emberton would be good and also possibly looking at the A509; there was a roundabout option quite a while ago.

Fred asked if there was a reason the group couldn't pursue the school field? Peter responded that there was no reason why the group shouldn't pursue it. Peter stated that he would have a chat with Stuart Proffitt regarding Field 13 to understand what was happening. **Action PG**

8. **Responses from Article 14 Consultation** – covered under point 7.
9. **Next steps** – Agree/amend vision statement, look at all sites put forward, Field 13, school field, Housing Needs Assessment refresh, Affordable housing option.
10. **Any other business** – There was no other business.
11. **Date of next virtual meeting** – Tuesday 16th June 2020 at 7pm