

Shaftesbury and Melbury Abbas & Cann Neighbourhood Plan Group (SMACNPG)

Terms of Reference

Introduction

In response to Governments changes to planning laws, Shaftesbury Town Council (STC), Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council (MACPC), Shaftesbury and District Task Force and North Dorset District Council have embarked on neighbourhood planning. The STC and MACPC Neighbourhood Plan Group was formed in response to this initiative in order to make most efficient use of the assets available, ensuring that the evolution of the plan area and all activities related to the needs of the communities.

STC and MACPC are jointly responsible bodies for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, although the communities concerned will ultimately decide through the referendum procedure whether the plan should be adopted or not.

The Terms and Reference outline the key roles and responsibilities of the main partners involved in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town and Parish Councils and NDDC are committed to working in partnership with the SMACNPG to produce an up-to-date and effective neighbourhood plan that reflects the needs of Shaftesbury and the Parish of Melbury Abbas & Cann. Resources will be committed as appropriate by all partners, including time, to produce a viable plan.

Purpose of the SMAC Neighbourhood Plan Group

The aim of the neighbourhood planning process is to update, review and consolidate its plan. In addition it will provide an opportunity for the community to set out a planning and land use policy framework for the area to enable the achievement of identified local priorities. Its preparation will implement, as far as possible, the provisions of the Government's Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

On behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council and the Melbury Abbas & Cann Group Council, and in conjunction with members of the surrounding parishes and NDDC, the SMACNPG will develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the area bounded by the two Councils areas of responsibility.

The NPG may form sub-committees to undertake various aspects of its work such as producing the Neighbourhood Development Plan, Town Planning and Town Design Statement.

The NPG will:

- Suggest a timetable for the project and identify costs associated with delivering the project.
- Establish the future housing and business needs of the area, having regard for the wider social, economic and welfare considerations of the area, e.g. health, education.
- Develop policies to inform the future development and use of land in the area.
- Identify and define the development boundaries applicable to the plan.
- Be responsible for drawing up the Neighbourhood Plan and any revisions as a result of the ongoing consultation process.
- Have regard to relevant national policies, EU and Human Rights legislation when developing the plan.
- Conduct a sustainability assessment to support the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is supported by an effective ongoing programme of communication and consultation with the communities, North Dorset District Council, developers, adjoining Parishes and other key third parties e.g. Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England.
- Support the Town and Parish Councils in finding consensus through a referendum in ultimately securing community endorsement of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Apply for, and use grant funding in compliance with all relevant legislation.

Membership

Membership of the NPG is open to any person who can claim to have an interest in the future of the town, whether or not they are residents in the town. Membership should include local stakeholders from residents, elected representatives, community groups & businesses.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Members of the group will work together for the benefit of their communities; treat other Members of the group with respect and dignity, allowing Members to air their views without prejudice and interruption.
- Work with the District Council to establish the future development needs of Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish and the surrounding areas.
- Work with the District Council to develop policies to inform the future development and use of land in the area.
- Identify and define the development boundaries applicable to the plan.

- Work with all stakeholders to draw up the Neighbourhood Plan and any revisions because of the ongoing consultation process.
- Report to and liaise with officers of relevant councils and other statutory bodies likely to have an interest in the plan, keeping them informed of the progress of the plan.
- Liaise with their communities, promoting the plan, answering concerns and questions and contributing to any public consultation process.
- Gather the evidence required to formulate the plan
- Appointing professional advisors as necessary to assist with the preparation of the plan
- Prepare a draft Neighbourhood Plan in line with the results of public consultation(s).

Declaration of Interest

Members of the NPG will complete a register of interests form on joining the group, which will be held by the Secretary. These may be made available to the public on request. At NPG meetings members will be expected to declare any personal prejudicial or fiduciary interests and withdraw from discussions or voting where decisions or recommendations on a particular issue could potentially result in any advantage or disadvantage to them personally or to family or close associates.

Quorum

Six Members of the SMACNPG shall represent a quorum.

Voting Rights

Each member will have one vote and any matter will be decided by a simple matter of those representatives voting and present in the room where the proposition/motion is put. If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Chairman shall have a casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Chairman chooses to exercise a casting vote. The Chairman shall take the vote by a show of hands or, if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

GENERAL MATTERS

The Terms of Reference of the SMAC Neighbourhood Plan Group will be jointly approved by their respective full councils and will be continually reviewed by SMACNPG during the life of the project to ensure they remain compliant and fit for purpose.

Any funding received on behalf of STC and MACPC will be held by STC and a full audit trail of expenditure will be maintained by STC and be open to inspection.

The SMACNPG will regularly report its findings and progress to the Town, Parish and District Councils including the ongoing budgetary implications associated with the project.

NPG Meetings will normally be held in the Shaftesbury Town Hall once a month on a published date. These arrangements may be subject to change dependent on the work programme and the availability of sufficient NPG members. Members of the public, including representatives from relevant organisations, with an interest in the Neighbourhood Plan may attend the meeting to observe (and join in the debates at the invitation of the Chairman) but are advised to contact the Chairman or Secretary in advance to check that the meeting is being held and the likely agenda. The Secretary will make notes of the meeting and record the main decisions and action points. The minutes should be published on the NPG website (www.shaftesburyplan.co.uk) and made available to STC and MACPC.