

# Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group

## Minutes of Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Held as a Skype videoconference commencing at 7 pm.

- Present:** Julia Buckley – Bridgnorth Town Council  
Henry Carver  
David Cooper – Bridgnorth Town Council  
Clive Dyson – Steering Group Chairman & Bridgnorth Town Council  
George Edwards – Tasley Parish Council  
Mike Golding  
Karen Sawbridge - Bridgnorth Town Council  
Gary Timmins – Worfield Parish Council
- Guests:** Geoff Davies – Chamber of Commerce and BTC  
Darren Hodson

### 1. Minutes of and actions from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. The status of outstanding actions is:

- Action 20/6-1:** Attendees to let Clive know if they can assist [on publicising the Phase 1 report] with Facebook or suggest someone who can. **No responses**
- Action 20/6-2:** Clive to ask Robert Law if he wishes to continue as a member. **Emailed but no reply**
- Action 20/6-3:** Clive to arrange for representation on “Future Bridgnorth”. **Ongoing**
- Action 20/6-4:** Clive to forward David Cooper’s email on job statistics in Bridgnorth to participants. **Not yet addressed – David to send to Clive**
- Action 20/6-5:** Participants (and recipients of these minutes) to send a set of bullet points summarising their thoughts on the impact of COVID-19 to Clive, who will assemble these into a draft document. **One response from Susan Howle**
- Action 20/6-6:** Julia Buckley to send Clive a list of individuals active in [social sustainability]. We will look to arrange a meeting to discuss forming a working group. **Complete**
- Action 20/6-7:** Sarah Barlow to consider who might be involved [in Education and Skills] and send Clive a list of individuals to involve in a working group. **Ongoing**

### 2. New member

George Edwards is now Tasley Parish Council's representative on the Steering Group, taking over from Susan Howle. Thanks to Susan for all her work to date.

### 3. “Future Bridgnorth” and a BID

Little progress since our last meeting. A meeting is to be arranged (separate to the Bridgnorth Plan activity), inviting Mark Barrow, Gemma Davies, their nominated Shropshire Council attendees, and the Marches LEP. Other attendees to be finalised.

We noted that we need to consider, separately, if and how to take forward activity to build on the work of the Business and Economy working group.

## 4. Environmental Sustainability working group

Mike Golding is chairing the working group and reported on progress. A draft report has been circulated for comment. The group is recommending three projects to be addressed:

- Optimising the management of green spaces in the town, led by the Town Council.
- Addressing the insulation of housing. In the short term, this should look to maximise take up of funding under the recent government initiative.
- Mobility and pollution, covering, in the short term, (a) the improvement of footpaths and cycleways and (b) reducing pollution and improving traffic flow between Pound Street and St. John's street. This will require working with Shropshire Council Highways and Environmental Health. In the longer term, more significant improvements need to be planned for in light of the potential growth in the town.

David Cooper commented that Shropshire Council began developing a Local Transport Plan in 2018. Publication of the final document is running late.

## 5. Social Sustainability

A tentative meeting has been held to explore creating a working group. This has started to collect a list of groups in the town that are supporting the young, the old and the vulnerable. Meetings are being held every two weeks and will initially look to decide how to proceed. Julia Buckley is looking for someone to represent this field on the Steering Group.

## 6. Sporting Bridgnorth

Geoff Davies is chairing Sporting Bridgnorth and provided an update. Most sports clubs in the town are involved and are collaborating to improve facilities and share experience and costs.

**Action 20/7-1:** Geoff Davies to circulate recent minutes to the Steering Group and investigate if Sporting Bridgnorth can provide a report on its work, as an input to the Bridgnorth Plan.

We recognised the need to consider the town's requirements for leisure facilities, given future growth. Can this be considered by Sporting Bridgnorth?

## 7. Draft Local Plan and implications for the Bridgnorth Plan

The draft of the Local Plan to be submitted to Shropshire Council Cabinet has been released. This includes a Garden Village at Tasley, larger than that previously proposed at Stanmore (to meet requirements to 2038 instead of 2036). It takes no regard of submissions by the Town Council and Tasley Parish Council, or of the Phase 1 Report for the Bridgnorth Plan.

The following comments were made by attendees:

- Lack of consultation on the Tasley proposals, so that the resultant Local Plan may not be sound, in planning terms. Has just accepted a single developer's proposals rather than seeking an optimal solution for the area.
- SC has not listened. Has not been helped by earlier acceptance of 'High Growth'.
- SC has not followed due process. Local councils are likely to object on this basis.
- It has been difficult to get SC to respond to substantive issues raised by parish councils. Responses have been obfuscated and did not related to issues raised.
- Parish councils and groups in the town seem to have similar views. We should seek to collaborate and speak with a unified voice, and expect SC to listen and respond.

- Previous experience over the Smithfield car park is not encouraging. 7,000 signatures against but SC willing to spend taxpayers' money to fight local opinion.
- We must use SC's own data and system. Data shows that Bridgnorth has been the worst affected by COVID-19. It has been disproportionately affected and there is not evidence it can recover to meet the high growth targets. This should be included in responses.
- Is there a way that Bridgnorth can opt out of being a Primary Centre under the Place Plan?
- The Phase 1 Report has local proposals for Bridgnorth with reasoning. SC should explain why they will not follow this.
- Should 'Bridgnorth' threaten legal action and the basis that due process has not been followed?

The meeting then voted on the following (not mutually exclusive) options:

1. That parish councils, other organisations and individuals should respond to SC's Local Plan consultation, recommending that they object on the grounds that due process has not been followed. In particular, there has been inadequate consultation on the Tasley Garden Village proposal and there is inadequate evidence of the need for the proposed growth in housing and employment, especially given the pronounced adverse effect of COVID-19 upon the local economy. We expect they may have other objections to add. The examiner will consider these objections and may reject the Local Plan. **The meeting was unanimously in favour of this.**
2. That we should monitor whether an action group is formed to object to the Local Plan proposals. Such a group might decide to threaten legal action. The Steering Group would decide if and how to support it. We noted our intent to remain to be seen as an impartial body. **The meeting voted in favour of this, with two votes against.**
3. That the Steering Group should take on the role of such an action group. **The meeting voted unanimously against this.**

We agreed that the parish and town councillors present will press for the local councils to collaborate in considering how to respond to the Local Plan proposals.

We agreed that we will consider if and how to update the Phase 1 report in light of the impact of COVID-19 and the Local Plan proposals.

**Action 20/7-2:** All to consider if and how the sections of the 1st Phase Report (and Consultation Document) should be revised. Offers to revise relevant sections to be sent to Clive.

## 8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Steering Group will be held by Zoom videoconference at 7pm on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August. Please nominate a delegate to attend on your behalf if you cannot attend.