

## Present:

Allan Gibson

Roger Marshallsay

Pauline Grainger

Roland Cundy

David Cornish

## Apologies:

Graham Jukes

Andy Pearce

In attendance: Liz Alexander (Bell-Cornwell) Chris Matthey Griff Marshallsay

**AGENDA**

- Housing
  - Whether we specify a housing number,
  - Issues around a Housing Needs Assessment
  - How we manage WBC/ housing allocation
  - Marino land question - status of the Hogwood Garden planned development
- Consultation - Phase 1 results and Phase 2 planning

Note: CM and GM also had questions for Liz Alexander and these were time dependent.

**Minutes**

AG opened meeting by saying there were varying views within the NDP group as to whether or not it was necessary to specify a housing number in the plan. Given the views of local residents and the fact that our Vision Statement refers to “embrace” and not “promote” the need for change, AG was not convinced this was the right approach unless there was a clear and substantial benefit in doing so. The first purpose in calling this meeting was to get advice so that the Steering Group could resolve their position.

DC said the working assumption from the start of the project was that the houses on the Marino land (bought by L&G about 2 years ago) could equate to our housing allocation over the life of the plan. 3500 + houses are planned of which approx. 1500 fall into the Finchampstead parish.

LA advised that there were benefits to specifying that our plan starts ahead of adoption in a 2021 referendum. As we started working on the plan this year, she suggested we date the plan 2019-2036. LA thought we had a strong argument for including the Marino numbers in our plan as over the next few years there would need to be a period of consolidation and additional infrastructure to keep up with the development and the houses and families need to be assimilated into the area – additional doctors, schools etc. required. It was pointed out that the L&G numbers are a 20% increase in the number of homes in Finch which is a significant number. LA noted that the external examiner had accepted this argument in relation to the Arborfield and Barkham NDP. The period of adjustment needed to the 20% increase in the parish housing stock could cover the whole life of the plan.

Another argument for not specifying a number was that no more houses could be serviced by current facilities as these are already inadequate because of the current/existing large scale developments so any more would be unsustainable, but this would be dependent on the view of WBC.

GM advised that having run the HELAA methodology across the Finch call for sites, the capacity available is small. They (housing) have identified a few small scale sites which would accommodate only a few homes and DC/RC suggested these sites are discussed with the Parish planning group.

LA suggested looking for sites which could accommodate the different parts of the community but GM said on very small sites there was not scope to put different houses for different groups.

GM/CM felt it was more appropriate to look at the sites, assess the suitability and then define a group to draw from. It was easier with “estate” developments to provide a variety of buildings but with very

small sites the buildings will be clearly defined by their surroundings. There have identified only a couple of sites of any size that could provide a mix.

WBC have given an indication that there are no SDA planned for Finch and gave an indication the next one was Grazeley. They are expecting to have their list of short-listed sites ready for public in mid-late January.

LA suggested the housing group make a list of their preferences for sites and put to WBC but don't base plan on it. In the light of WBC reviewing the housing numbers LA felt we carry on working with current numbers but if/when it changes we then review.

GM wondered how important is the "1km walking distance to services" criteria (in the light of the Johnson Drive and Sand Martin decisions) and LA felt this was dependent on the scale of the site. A large site was able to provide additional closer facilities whereas a small site has no scope to provide own services. WBC would be looking at the distances in relation to existing housing whereas the inspector could be more pedantic about it.

Overall the outcome of the discussion was that it was logically reasonable not to have a housing number on the basis the 1500 L&G homes needing to be assimilated into the area. Historically there has been no development in Finch with more than 50 homes over the last 15 years. Most development is infill/backfill/windfall and planning has been granted on the basis of 1 for 1 or occasionally 2 for 1. Building on the basis of 4 for 1 say, would not be acceptable.

DC thought as our housing needs are being met by the 1500 L&G homes we don't need any more homes but others felt the vision statement "embraces" additional development where and when appropriate. GM felt strongly there should be continued opportunities for infill/backfill/windfall and there is not a need for a number but the L&G development only goes to 2025 so there might be the need for additional development. The role of the plan is to accommodate the housing number given to us but we should base this on historic needs.

RM wondered if we could put a "date" on sites for development but LA said no, once a site was agreed as acceptable it could be built on at any time; an NDP cannot determine when a site is brought forward for planning.

There was general agreement to the position that the plan doesn't mention specific sites but these are put on an agreed list of sites for if ever needed. It is quite feasible to have a list of "reserved" sites.

LA suggested a review of the plan is written in to it for the eventuality of changes in circumstances. The policies in the plan should manage the development of these small identified sites and narrative should be included to support this e.g, the size of developments in Finch over the last 15 years. We define what is possible based on this information.

LA felt a Housing Needs Assessment was not necessary as WBC are doing one; it carries greater value in for a large site compared to a small one. It is about numbers and types of houses which could be useful as evidence to support policies but not essential. The management of the plan gives the ability to control development and the policies determine the planning.

LA advised Hurst are taking a similar approach to us and B'ham and Arborfield have used hard data from other sources and this has been acceptable to external examiner.

Questioned about the value of a second questionnaire if the response rate was lower than the first, LA said its value would be in the additional info it provided about the population's views, needs and plans.

DC felt it added substance to the plan but questioned the value if responses are less than previous. GM was concerned it raised expectations which were not deliverable.

AG said we had identified under-representation of the under 40 age group amongst those completing the phase 1 questionnaire. He explained that we had plans to try to engage this group in our phase 2 engagement plan and showed LA the matrix of engagement methods we were considering using.

RM/RC wondered if we should be concerned and if it matters that we didn't engage the 18-40 age group and LA said as long as we try and make the effort that is all that is required. RC said there were ideas for engaging this age group, one being to hold meetings for parents of primary age children through the schools.

AG asked about work on the NDP post referendum and LA said different groups tackled it in different ways. Some groups called it an end; other groups review and monitor to see if plan is working and how it is being used; others get it adopted by the parish council and reviewed by them.

There was discussion about traffic/transport which featured heavily as issues in the phase 1 questionnaire and if we can address this. It was felt it is the impact of all the development around Finchampstead causing the problems. LA suggested setting up a list of local priorities relating to these issues for consideration as a use of CIL money. LA will look at small tangible projects that other parishes have undertaken to relieve traffic/transport problems. The plan cannot include strategic transport plans but can include a commitment to explore traffic issues.

LA asked CM and GM how they were finding communication with WBC. They felt it was reasonable within the context of what they could/could not say. LA knows Ian Bellinger if they need the intro. DC felt WBC were still on a learning curve with NDPs and they were learning along with the Parish. LA stressed it was important to have our plan in line with the emerging WBC plan and policies need to be in agreement. The NDP policies need to enhance theirs and therefore unopen to challenge. CM was concerned that WBC plan will not be ready until well into 2020 so it decided outline policies should be sketched out in line with WBC current policies and as long as they conform to the Feb 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework>) there should not be a problem. AG felt as the policies need to meet basic conditions by writing early we will discover what evidence is still required. LA said there was no problem with using the Barkham and Arborfield plan as an example.

LA said WBC have a duty to support us and if their time scale slips it has to be worked around as the NDP cannot proceed to examination without Wokingham plan in place. AG needs to add to risk register "how to progress if WBC slips"

In summary the conclusions drawn were:

1. Indicative housing number not required as part of our plan – disadvantages outweigh advantages
2. We can use the L&G homes, representing a 20% increase the parish's housing stock, as a central consideration in our plan and as a relevant backdrop for policy formulation
3. Work on assessing Finch call for sites should remain 'backpocket' information and not form part of our published plan
4. The plan should have policy provision for continuing 'windfall' (e.g. infill/backfill) development of a type and scale seen over recent years. This would be consistent with our Vision and the need to comply with NPPF sustainable development principles
5. A Housing Needs Assessment in line with the Arborfield and Barkham model would be sufficient
6. GM/CM should discuss their site preferences/information with the parish
7. GM/CM have additional meeting with LA when necessary
8. Further slippage by WBC in renewing their Local Plan represented a significant risk to the FNDP project

Meeting closed 4.45pm  
Pauline Grainger

Signed as a true record of the meeting.....  
Date.....