

Windsor Neighbourhood Plan

Minutes of the Inaugural Forum (“Group”) Meeting held on Thursday 8 May 2014

18.30-20.30 in the Ascot Room, Windsor Guildhall

Present: Claire Milne (Interim Chair); John Bastow (Interim Co-Chair); Susy Shearer (Interim Secretary); Ian Bacon; Cllr G. Bathurst; Sara Berwick; Brian Carter; Pauline Carter; Kevin Chapman; Nick Clemo; Carole DaCosta; Wisdom DaCosta; Jane Daly; Franco DeLuca; Ingrid Fernandes; Peter Furney; Sue Furney; Colin Hague; Gill Hall; Lynne Healy; John Holdstock; Hilary Hopper; David Jessey; Sue Kemp; Emma Kenny; Bob Kiralfy; Malcolm Lock; Alison Logan; Cori Mackin; Marcia Malia; Andrew Melville; Jorge Nash; Helen Price; Cllr Dee Quick; Trevor Robinson; Jude Sharpington; Margaret Shepherd; Margery Thorogood; Paul A. Waterhouse; Peter Wilkinson; Frances Williams; Antony Wood

Guests: Stella Scrivener (Planning Aid); Francis Batt (Windsor Express); Dan Whiteway (RB Observer)

Apologies: Vivienne Allen; Jane Carter; L. Hart; Curt Hopkins; David Malia; Phil McMichael; Tais Olivera; Ted Shepherd; Matthew Stoddart; Julia White

1- Welcome and introductions (CM)

Claire welcomed everyone and invited all present to introduce themselves around the table. She explained that the Windsor NP was in a sensitive “transition phase” and that this meeting would provide background on the current position, establish the overall aims of the Forum and begin charting the way forward.

Before commencing the main business, **Claire** informed the meeting that Peter Hooper had very suddenly and sadly passed away in April and she wished to record the Forum’s sincere appreciation for the valuable insights and contribution which Peter had made to the work of the CWNP, confirmed by all present.

2- Meeting Arrangements (CM)

The meeting was asked to agree the approach to the operation of the Forum and production of the Plan:

- Meetings, discussions and all relevant work would be conducted in as open and democratic a manner as possible, with participation open to all residents;
- The approach of the Plan and Forum would be non-political;
- The Chairs would invite speakers to present their points and all participants were asked to listen to, and treat, all individuals with courtesy and respect;
- Anyone deliberately contravening this code of conduct would be warned, with possible suspension from the meeting, and possibly the Forum, if such action were considered appropriate.

AGREED (Show of hands)

3- Current situation update and Project Timetable (CM / JB)

Claire confirmed that the Forum had not yet been legally established. Following the submission of an application for NP area designation, which it was hoped would be accepted by RBWM, a 6-week public consultation would be undertaken to confirm the WNP boundaries and the Constitution, permitting the WNP Forum to be formally agreed. This evening’s meeting would enable the Forum to set the intent for this process and legitimise the small “Interim” committee to keep things moving. **Key documents** had been circulated prior to this evening including: **a)** CWNP’s response to the BLP Consultation (04/14); **b)** CWNP Topic Group Summary Vision Document (01/14); **c)** Proposed WNP timetable; **d)** Draft WNP Constitution & Map; and **e)** the Central Windsor Business NP proposed Map.

John B. summarised the background of and events since April 2013 which led to the proposal for the WNP:

- The CWNP grew out of the pan-Windsor/Eton/Eton Wick NP (WENP) after West Windsor and E/EW were struck from that initiative, and a great deal of extremely valuable work had been done

during the development of the WENP which had enabled the CWNP to make its own substantial progress. West Windsor had always felt they would like to take part in the CWNP, however, and John Holdstock, then WWRA Chairman, wrote to Cllr Airey, CWNP Chair, asking if re-instatement of WW could be considered. Following extensive discussions on this matter, it was agreed by a majority vote during the CWNP's AGM (7/4/14) to dissolve the CWNP.

- It had been hoped that the establishment of a new pan-Windsor Plan could emerge seamlessly from the CWNP although this proved not to be possible either legally or administratively, and it was necessary to begin the process afresh. It was also clear that not all aspects of neighbourhood planning had been fully understood in the earlier stages of the process, and new information partly from other NPs was now available to help inform the process for Windsor.
- The WNP would essentially provide for the perspectives of local residents but also incorporates the views of local businesses. It is a means of enabling residents to write policies which will help shape the local environment, within the strategic aims of the BLP. The Neighbourhood Plan will be examined by RBWM and then go to a local Referendum in which residents will be entitled to vote; business representatives are precluded from voting, however.
- When CWNP dissolved, a number of businesses thought it would be useful to develop a specific Central Windsor Business NP wherein one ratepayer will have one vote alongside the votes of residents. Therefore, 2 separate NP applications have been put forward with adjacent boundaries as overlapping boundaries would preclude the possibility of either Plan being accepted. (The Examiner may decide to extend the voting area to include residents from outside a Plan area.) At submission, it is the intention that the two Plans will go forward as a single document in two parts. After extensive discussion, it was concluded that this proposal has considerable merit, particularly as £40,000 in Business Rates are collected annually by RBWM. The **Acting Chairs** of both groups have felt this would be a good "blend", proposing to work together side-by-side in accordance with legal and administrative requirements. This evening, the meeting is being asked for its agreement to go forward on this basis, with a six-week public consultation to follow.

A general discussion ensued, during which the following points were raised:

Marcia asked how residents would have a say on Night Time Economy issues. **Stella** confirmed both Plans would be written by those who live and work in the area and residents would have to be involved in both Plans' production and voting. **Claire** confirmed the "Evidence Base" is crucial: if Business Group was seen not to have consulted properly, the Plan could be turned down by the Examiner.

Hilary asked if we could learn from other towns' experiences. **Stella** said **Central Milton Keynes** had the most advanced Business Plan and had already been examined, with recommendations made, and will be amended before going out to consultation. In addition, the Plan's Referendum Area now covers their entire Borough.

Alison observed that although the "Combined Plans" process was "untidy", it was a useful device. **Claire** reiterated that both groups were keen to find common paths and achieve collective success, with interests which mostly overlap already, and that neither group wished to proceed divisively.

Wisdom asked how the group would ensure that business proposals would be broad enough to meet the needs of the town as a whole. **David J.** confirmed that businesses want to work fully with the residents' Forum with total "free flow" of information combined with a "common sense" approach. He said there was an enormous pool of advice and experience which would be used to the widest possible benefit.

Cori asked how the process of co-operation between NPs would work. **David J.** and **John B.** confirmed that there would be joint meetings and the possibility for individuals from both Plans to be members of all Topic Groups. **Jorge** added there should be no need for concern as both Plans would be framed to be in conformity with BLP.

Stella said Map Boundaries would be negotiated to ensure issues of legality and balance were fully addressed. **Claire** mentioned that the aspect of Open Space should be covered in the wider Windsor Plan. She referred to potential issues such as moving the Coach Park to free up space for parking, not have possible within earlier BP boundaries but now resolved through appropriate boundary changes.

Stella reiterated that throughout the Plan formation process, accepted **“Best Practice” requires engagement with and involvement of all who live, work and do business in a given area**, and that Referendum voting can be expanded (there is a good chance of this in the Windsor context) although restrictions would normally apply. **Nick** suggested that giving businesses the opportunity to vote was helpful to them to ensure greater control but was concerned that the Plans will be assured of legitimacy. **Stella** confirmed that while policies would only be written for and apply to the respective individual Plans (for WNP, this would be for matters involving planning permission) there should be no problem as the area boundaries do not overlap.

Susy confirmed that a significant amount of work had been done over the preceding two years under the previous two NPs, documentation of which was freely available to all. She also drew attention to the **RBWM “Evidence Base”**, the basis for the emerging BLP, which provides an invaluable resource of research and data for use by the NP Topic Groups.

Helen asked why Windsor appeared to be proceeding differently to other areas and asked for agreements to ensure the appropriate outcomes would be met. **Stella** confirmed that although 14 NPs had now been passed, no Business Plans (most are community-led due to legislation) had been passed as yet. **Claire** is planning to meet with WCofC to agree standard terms of reference and wanted to establish that the Forum feels this is the best approach. She mentioned that Government is beginning to appreciate the NP process as a whole may need to be adapted as limitations are already starting to be recognised.

John H. suggested that if the meeting endorses this “joint” proposal tonight, there are a number of housing areas, eg. Arthur Road, where residents should be consulted where they will be affected by boundary issues. **Stella** said the Forum will need to show how they have been engaged and their needs addressed. **Claire** added that any Consultation activities would seek to ensure these aspects are fully covered.

Colin highlighted that some Windsor businesses did not fall within the BP area. **Claire** confirmed the WNP would incorporate the business aspect of the wider area, although individual businesses (eg. Legoland) would not be entitled to vote on the WNP.

Cllr Bathurst was pleased so many people were becoming involved in the overall process. Referring to the Plan boundaries, he suggested that Arthur Road, Duke Street and Bath Island all be included in the WNP, and that the WLR boundary should be regularised to connect Alexandra Gardens to the River. **Claire** stated that RBWM will discuss and agree the boundary so there are no anomalies, and Central Government will have final say on the WLR proposals. **Stella** confirmed that the proposed railway was a strategic decision within the BLP and that NPs would have little say in this matter. Cllr Bathurst said a consultation on transport will be taking place and that perhaps a more appropriate forum will be instituted later this year to obtain peoples’ views first and then draft a coherent transport plan.

Trevor voiced concern that the BP created a “hole” in the WNP area and a possible “snaffling” of the Central Conservation Area. **Claire** reconfirmed that the “Joint Plan” was a “clunky device” but necessary to enable businesses to vote. **Antony** said the Forum would not wish a “Vicar of Dibley” situation to develop and that this proposal represented a democratic process which must be trusted, in the best interests of the community. **Stella** confirmed that Conservation Area policies are covered at higher levels, and there would be some limitations on every aspect of the Plans. **Margery** said it was nonetheless important to take account of the level of dissent being voiced and expressed concern that perhaps the two groups would find it difficult in practice to work together. **Claire** returned to the fact that the meeting would need to decide on the nature of the application – single or joint.

4- Application to RBWM and new area (JB)

John provided copies of the proposed WNP area, explaining that the sections of the two WW Wards which were legally covered within the Bray Parish Boundary would be excluded. At this point, the meeting was asked to take a vote (show of hands) as to whether to proceed with the “combined” applications.

The motion was: “This meeting of interested parties agrees to make a formal application to the RBWM for the designation of a WNP area (which will allow for a separate CWNP business area) and for approval to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the WNP area.”

This was **passed by a majority** (For: 28 votes / Against: 6 / Abstain: 4 / Non-vote: 4) and the meeting agreed to proceed with a **Joint Plan**.

5- Draft Constitution (JB)

John stated that the voting body is proposed as the whole Forum with an elected working committee to oversee the management of the Plan’s work; roles would be identified and skills were needed to enable the Plan move forward. He thanked all the volunteers already working on the Plan and asked for suggested amendments from everyone by 22/5/14 so that a draft constitution could be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.

6- Forum Membership & process (JB)

John B. confirmed that Forum membership was a requirement both for voting and to ensure adequate representation of residents’ views and issues. The list of members would be submitted to RBWM. Registration forms, including declaration of personal interests/affiliations, must be submitted for all members.

7- Current Project / Communications / Engagement Plan (CM, SS, WD, JH)

Claire confirmed that interim contact information for the WNP and its activities was in place and that policy writing would probably begin in about a month. The current grant funding (~£8000) would expire in December 2014 and all monies would need to be spent by that time. The major survey initiated under the CWNP was being extended to include West Windsor and would run until the end of July 2014, at which time a Final Report would be prepared to include the Policy Options, meanwhile a WW Launch would be organised for the end of June. It was hope designation would be in place by that time.

Susy asked if and when a single survey would be undertaken to cover both plans. **Claire** confirmed this was likely to happen in September. **Susy** mentioned that considerable work had already been done in the wider WW area through the “I Love Dedworth” Project initiated by Radian and that the WNP interim committee had been liaising closely with Radian to look at data, projects and processes which could usefully inform the WNP at this stage.

Claire said the Ascot Plan and process were generally a very helpful model for Windsor’s purposes. The Plan will be “bounced” back and forth between the groups and RBWM until all are happy with a draft version. **Peter W.** asked who would do the necessary work to achieve this. **Stella** said RBWM Officers would be closely involved throughout, and that an Independent Examiner would have the final say. **Claire** indicated that Survey Monkey would once again be used to help minimise workload and to compile / analyse data.

8- Next Steps (CM)

Claire stated that training was now needed in order for Topic Groups to begin planning further work, drafting policies and identifying projects (ie. non-policy matters which could be incorporated into the Plan), and funding will help support this. **Stella** will organise specific sessions in Windsor to take place as soon as possible.

Cori is now putting together the website WindsorPlan.org.uk which went "live" as of today (8/5/14), e-mail to follow. **John B.** said info@windsorplan.org.uk would work in the interim. **Bob** suggested placing key documents as PDF files on the website.

Hilary will help organise "door knocking" in West Windsor particularly, and more volunteers will be needed to help with this around the whole Windsor area. **John H. and Wisdom** will include information and a request for help within the upcoming edition of the WWRA newsletter.

9- **AOB**

- **Ingrid** suggested the question of Topic Group structure be discussed at the next meeting.
- **John H.** wished to register a vote of thanks to all who had given so much to the process so far and to the organisers of tonight's meeting.

10- **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 12 June 2014 VENUE TBC