

Emberton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

(A committee of Emberton Parish Council)

Minutes of Meeting held virtually – 20th October 2020

Present:

Jason Bevan- Chairman
Joe Walker – Vice Chairman
Melanie Duncan
Colin Jamieson
Fred Markland

Chris Akrill – Town Planning Service

Mrs M Foster – resident
Mr R Foster – resident
Mrs A Malcolm – resident
Mr I Malcolm - resident

Karen Goss – Clerk

- 1. Apologies for Absence** – Apologies for Absence were received from Virginia McTierney.
- 2. Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda** - There were no Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda.
- 3. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 29th September 2020** – The Minutes of the previous Meeting held on the 29th September 2020 were agreed. The clerk to provide the Minutes to the Chairman for signing at the next face to face meeting.
- 4. Public comments, questions or representations** – Members of the public present were present but did not wish to raise any questions and were at the meeting as observers.
- 5. Review of sites put forward** – Chris had emailed the draft neighbourhood plan showing the new sites put forward of The Institute and Field 13 but most of the group had not had a chance to look at the amendments. The review of the sites was shown on zoom so that residents also had the opportunity to have sight of this. Chris commented that he had been through the sites, maintaining the settlement boundary as defined in Plan:MK. The introductory paragraph had been amended to bring it up to date and some feedback had also been included from the initial consultation which was why the plan had changed direction. The housing site consideration would be the same as before albeit the settlement boundary would now be defined by Plan:MK rather than the wider area which meant that the Acorn site was now adjacent to the settlement boundary. The Institute had been reinstated as a site to be considered following the discussion with EUC at the last meeting. Whilst there had not been a firm proposal, there was an intention from EUC to look at a potential development area which could be locally controlled in the middle of

the village. Chris commented that the Acorn site was not adjacent to the settlement boundary, was in open countryside, removed from the village and had access issues which highways had commented on; effectively saying that there was potential for affordable housing but the steering group might not necessarily support it. The owners of Manor Farm had put in various options but not all of them were intended to be delivered; it was an either/or option. Some of the sites put forward might be permitted development opportunities through conversion of farm buildings but this was something that could not be controlled through the neighbourhood plan. **Post meeting note:** For clarification, sites 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d – these sites were not intended to be submitted in their entirety, only specific areas were identified by the land owner.

Field 13 – Chris commented that this was a new site that Milton Keynes Council had put forward and was 3.5 hectares in total; not all of the site needed to be developed. Based on 30 dwellings per hectare which was standard, 0.2/0.3 hectares would be needed to deliver the number of houses required. It was a greenfield site, outside of the settlement boundary but was linked to the village by way of Hulton Drive on one side and existing houses on the other side. It was not particularly well related to the village centre but would be if the pavilion became the centre of the village if the pub didn't open. A drain ran across the field so it was in flood zone 1 so would be suitable for development. Ridge and furrow ran across the field perpendicular from the road that would be designated as a non designated heritage asset and Heritage England were encouraging neighbourhood plans to retain non designated heritage assets. Any development would have a detrimental impact on the field and ridge and furrow which would be hidden from any new housing and would be perceived as not being there. This was quite a negative point against this site. There was no statutory designation for the ridge and furrow so the farmer could go and destroy it. Generally speaking, because there was a lack of statutory designation it was a feature that was often destroyed so it might be something that, dependant upon how much ridge and furrow there was in Emberton, the group might take the view that the neighbourhood plan should seek to maintain this. This site could be one of the few remaining examples in the parish. The other issues with the site was gaining access; the trees on the verge were quite fairly spaced together and low hanging meaning that you would lose 2 or 3 of these trees to create an access way which would alter the character of Hulton Drive and instead of having a landscape sweep, it would end up with a large gap with houses fronting the road or back behind the remaining trees. Changing the character and feel would potentially be a demerit against the site. The third issue was parking; whilst the traffic generated by a potential development would not be that significant, there was additional parking on the road which created problems.

School field – Chris commented that he had undertaken the same assessment for the school field although it had not been put forward. The site was 0.7 hectares but sufficient land to use only 0.3/0.4 hectares for development to deliver up to 9 houses. There was sufficient land to include a parking area, leaving about half of the field for the school should it reopen. The site was within open countryside, outside the settlement boundary but outside the conservation area and very well related to the development around it. The site was in flood zone 1 and low risk of surface water flooding. There were two listed buildings opposite the entrance to the site so there would be heritage issues but there were trees which would screen the development to some extent. There was an existing access point to the road. There would be an option for delivering car parking which would take pressure off parking

around the clock tower and parking in the conservation area which could be a positive for the village.

Preferred option – It was **agreed** to include the Institute as a site which would be supported by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Jason commented that he had emailed Peter Beer at MKC to seek some clarity on the school field but he was not able to provide an update on the current situation. Chris commented that if the group pushed back and resisted field 13, it might help MKC to make a decision on the school field. Fred responded that it might be worth focusing on the pros and cons of both sites to see if the group could come up with any other strengths or weaknesses. One of the strengths of the school site was that it could link quite nicely with The Forge with improvements being made in the area that had been highlighted in previous documents. The field could also be linked quite nicely to ownership of the Bell & Bear. There were also benefits to the village by way of possibly providing a village shop or retail which would be out of the question on other sites that have been looked at, bringing more opportunities to the village. Chris responded that housing could be delivered on the school field site without too many negatives but development on field 13 would have consequences. Fred stated that the Hulton Drive access was an issue and already had affordable housing. Fred commented that the plan was becoming very negative by restricting the settlement boundary and the group needed to push the boundaries out to stop the conservation area becoming over developed with small scale development leading to the loss of trees and amenity value. Jason questioned whether Fred felt the settlement boundary should be changed. Fred responded that the boundary should be changed to allow development to organically take place. Chris stated that he was not averse to leaving the settlement boundary; the issue was that if it was moved, the group would have to justify why it was going back over the A509 as was the case in the original plan. Fred commented that there were other potential sites in the centre; West Lane, Hulton Drive were restricted in terms of development because of highways issues but something needed to be put into the plan to allow development in the right areas. Gravel Walk had previously been developed to allow further development to the west of the site. Jason replied that the school field had issues in its own rights and the field 13 site had significant issues. If the school field did not come forward, the group would need to look at other sites which were not so good. Jason asked Chris whether the settlement boundary could be looked at again in the light of this and Fred's comments. Chris commented that changing the settlement boundary might give the group more of a fluid approach to looking at development such as windfall sites. Joe responded that in terms of windfall, there were a couple of applications previously for such development.

Chris showed the group some photos of the landscape of Hulton Drive in comparison to the school field and stated that any development in Hulton Drive would change the character with the loss of trees and the hedge. Melanie responded that she could not see any positives for losing the ridge and furrow and arguably, the group should be looking to protect it. Jason commented that it didn't look a viable site for the infrastructure. Colin stated that during the weekend he had noticed cars parked all along Hulton Drive and the pavilion car park was full making it a single track road. **Action: JB** to speak to Peter Beer so seek a decision on the school field. Chris commented that Peter Beer would be governed by a committee and might therefore be cautious of doing anything. However, the decision to close the school was more than six months ago and a judicial review would have to be

submitted within that timeframe. The way that the school field could be brought forward would be to state that there would still be land for the school should it reopen. **Action:** CA to follow up with Peter Beer to give the view of the group on field 13 and to state that the school field was still the preferred option. Fred stated that at one time Ward Cllr Peter Geary was involved with the group. Chris commented that if Peter Geary wanted to assist this might help. Jason commented that someone from MKC needed to come and have a look at the school field. Chris stated that the school field could not be put in the plan if it was not available or deliverable.

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7.

Housing Needs Assessment refresh – nothing to report.

8. **Agree changes to V6 of the Neighbourhood Plan** – It was agreed that the group were not in a position to do this yet.

Next steps – JB and CA to speak to Peter Beer at MKC. CA to revise the settlement boundary and ALL to have a look at this. Melanie asked that at the next meeting, if there were still objections to field 13, if it would be possible to look at the protection of ridge and furrow fields in the neighbourhood plan. Chris responded that it had to be demonstrated that it was of community benefit. It could be discounted as it was a local heritage asset which would give the group some strength and Heritage England would support it. Fred asked if there was any protection status from Emberton Park where there were events and activities? An inner fence was put up in field 13 in recent years and trees planted which MKC had advised acted as a buffer for Emberton Park. If the trees had been planted for that reason, was there some form of protection to keep it that way?

9.

Any other business – It was noted that an email had been received from two members of the parish council requesting that the Acorn Nursery site be included in the plan. Melanie commented that these were comments from individuals rather than the parish council at this stage. Jason commented that if an application came forward, it might change the plan. He stated that windfall sites for small scale development had featured in MKC's 5 year housing supply plan. Fred commented that highways had made comments on the sites put forward for Acorn and West Lane and asked whether it was worth asking them to comment on the proposal for Hulton Drive. Jason asked whether it would affect the group's decision if highways commented positively? Chris commented that highways was one issue but the main point was the impact of the development. Chris stated that MKC had stated that there were two access points to the site; Hulton Drive and Harvey Drive. Fred responded that Harvey Drive was privately owned by him. Colin commented that Fred's comment regarding development in Gravel Walk was on the better side of the village in addition to the school field although this had not been put forward. It was noted that the land was in the region of 5 or 6 acres and owned by Cedar House.

Grant – Melanie asked if there was any funding in place to pay for Chris' services. Karen reported that the unspent grant from the financial year 2019/2020 of £1600 was returned. Chris commented that Vicki McLean had applied for this in conjunction with himself and that he would liaise with Vicki via Karen. **Action:** CA/KG

10.

Date of next virtual meeting – Tuesday 17th November 2020 at 7pm

The meeting closed at 8pm

DRAFT