



Notes of a Public Meeting Held Wednesday 24 February 2021 Via Zoom

Present: Steering Group Members Cllr Mervyn Hall (Chair), Cllr Peter Cairns (Vice Chair), Cllr Noel Barrett-Morton, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Susanne Harris, Shelley Parker (Town Clerk), Bill Roe (Marlborough College), Guy Singleton (Savernake Parish Council), Deirdre Watson Plus Dawn Whitehall (Marlborough Town Council) and 33 members of the public

Introduction

Councillor Hall welcomed everyone and gave a presentation to give an overview of the draft plan content and an explanation of the consultation process.

Clarification questions were invited

Responses included:

- MARL1: Delivering Affordable Homes in Marlborough
 - Whether the Housing Need Analysis had shown a need for higher numbers of dwellings for one person household, and whether the proposals reflected this as there seemed to be a focus on 2-3 bed homes. It was intended that there would be a mix, including providing homes for young families and multi generation households. As no public housing was proposed to be built in Marlborough, commercial developers would need a mix of housing for schemes to be financially viable, meeting either a 40% or 50% target of affordable homes.
 - If greenfield sites were to be used for new development, the Plan specified that 50% should be affordable homes in order to meet the housing needs of the community. Recent developments in Marlborough had provided large, luxury retirement homes where developers had no obligation to provide any affordable homes. The Plan would protect against new sites being used for this purpose. It wasn't possible for the Plan to affect Government policy which allowed housing associations to sell off stock but it could make provision for new affordable homes to be built.
 - Whether the impact on air quality, additional employment opportunities and other community facilities had been taken into account for the proposed increased number of homes – and therefore people and cars – within the Plan. Over time Government policy would reduce the number of polluting vehicles, improving air quality. The Plan had no power to influence this. Low paid workers currently commuted into Marlborough to work due to the high cost of

- housing – providing more affordable homes would allow people to live and work in the same town.
- Clarification of the number of new homes within the Plan, and how this related to the Local Plan. While Wiltshire Council's Local Plan currently identified a higher number of new homes to build in the Neighbourhood Area, once the Plan was 'made' the lower number within it would be adopted and provide some protection against further, speculative development. One participant challenged the numbers within the Plan and the Chair invited him to submit his points in writing for follow up outside the meeting.
 - Whether the special ecological significance of the old railway tunnel, particularly habitat for bats and dormice, would be compromised by the proposed development site at Salisbury Road and its access road: the landowner had shown itself to take this matter seriously previously and ecological sites would be protected during the planning process. A new foot and cycle path to link the development to the town centre was included in the proposal. This path avoided the busy Salisbury Road and should encourage residents away from using cars.
 - Whether Marlborough's schools could cope with the increase in population: Wiltshire Council had been involved in the discussions since 2015. It would also review the Plan at the next stage of the process, known as Regulation 15. Originally more school capacity had been intended but Wiltshire Council had advised that it would not be needed. A former Governor of Marlborough St Marys confirmed that the school had capacity for up to 420 pupils: there were around 340 pupils when the school had opened. S106 money from the Redrow development had enabled St Johns to put forward plans to create increased sporting capacity: developers had an obligation to provide funds to improve community facilities so more would be forthcoming from future developments.
 - Whether the planned development at the former St Peters School should include affordable homes – there were none currently. There was a question over whether 5 or 10 dwelling proposals were the minimum by which developers were obliged to provide 40% as affordable homes, and this would be followed up after the meeting.
 - The Plan did not have the power to define the architectural style of future developments to make sure they would fit with Marlborough's existing street scenes. There were also limited opportunities to specify this in the planning process. The Plan does however specify low carbon requirements in policies MARL20 and 21 with a view to mitigating climate change, and defining areas of special quality (MARL11) would help carry more weight on design alongside the usual planning rules that related to buildings in conservation areas.
- MARL7: Improving Public Parking. Whether the proposed 60 space free car park at Marlborough Common was adequate; whether the recent declaration of a climate emergency and concerns about air quality and a general need for people to take more exercise were adequately covered by the plan; whether reducing cars in the High Street would enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors. It was recognised that the new car park was unlikely to be used by visitors or shoppers, but would create additional parking opportunities for residents of nearby streets with no parking and for people who worked in the town. The Town Council had agreed to fund its development. No other sites had been identified for parking by landowners responding to the call for sites. While traffic was not in scope for the Plan the Town Council had recognised that both a Town Centre Plan and a Traffic Management Plan would be beneficial, and these were in the early stages of discussion.
 - MARL8: Delivering new Cemetery land. There was no potential to expand to the north of the existing Cemetery as the land was designated as a Marlborough College Memorial – known as the Wedgewood Field. No landowners to the east had come forward either as there would be little profit for them. Reusing the Victorian Cemetery to the west had been discounted. This left land adjacent to Frees Avenue which the Town Council was able to make available. While a location next to a road was not

ideal in terms of creating a peaceful environment, planting of green screening would be included to create a visible barrier from the road.

- MARL9: Protecting and Enhancing Marlborough's Community Facilities – with regard to the need for larger premises for the medical practice, during the call for sites a response had provided the opportunity for land immediately adjacent to the Leisure Centre to build a new practice. The aspiration would be to link the two together to create a wellbeing hub, using the car parking at the Leisure Centre as well as providing more parking on the new parcel of land. Whether it went forward would be a decision for Wiltshire Council and the NHS, and whether there was adequate parking included could only be assessed once plans had been drawn up. It was acknowledged that more information could be added to the draft plan to clarify this, as well as showing a location map for the potential site.
- Policy MARL11: Enhancing Marlborough's Areas of Special Quality. These have been defined as areas with architectural merit in their own right. They are not linked to the Conservation Area and a Neighbourhood Plan does not have the ability to change the Conservation Area. Future planning applications within these areas would be considered taking this policy into account.
- Preshute Parish: Clarification that the parish boundary between Marlborough and Preshute had not changed since 1934. Preshute had originally been part of the Neighbourhood Area but had chosen to withdraw. A Wiltshire Councillor stated the reason had largely been due to concerns about development on a green field site in the AONB, and that Preshute Parish Council had subsequently registered to create its own Neighbourhood Plan. The Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan could offer no protection in Preshute from unwanted development. Originally land within Preshute parish had been included in the site allocation plan – since its withdrawal the numbers of new homes in remaining sites had been adjusted to meet community needs. A request for information about what had originally been included for Preshute was made and it was agreed that this information would be provided via the Neighbourhood Plan website in the following few days.
- Next steps: all written responses to the current consultation would be reviewed carefully after 8 March. The plan would be revised as necessary based on those responses before going to the next stage where it would be reviewed by Wiltshire Council followed by another 6 week public consultation period.
- Referendum: it was hoped that, following further revisions and consultation stages, the final Plan would be included on the ballot paper for the May 6 local elections. If the Plan failed to be 'made' (agreed) at that stage the impact would be that the Neighbourhood Area (Marlborough, Mildenhall and Savernake parishes) would be open to potentially higher numbers of new houses than the maximum limit in the Neighbourhood Plan. Wiltshire Council's Local Plan provided a minimum number, which was higher than the number included in the current draft plan.
- The Plan was broadly limited to defining land use – suggestions for improving wild areas, creating mindfulness gardens, adding more benches on the Common or enhancing existing green areas could not be covered by the Plan but could be addressed in other areas. For example, Plume of Feathers Garden off London Road was currently leased to a mental health charity. Marlborough Rugby Football Club had included a proposal to create a wildflower area to mitigate the impact of its request for additional training space on The Common (*this proposal was currently subject to a separate consultation*)
- In answer to disappointment expressed at the lack of a 15 year plan for sports development in the Plan, the Chair agreed that there was scope to expand MARL15: Protecting and Improving Green Infrastructure or create a new policy. He would consult with sports organisations on this. The call for sites had included land for new sports pitches but no landowners had come forward, likely because there would be

little profit for them in doing so. Grass pitches could only be used a few times each week to preserve their condition, alternatives should also be considered such as artificial playing surfaces to provide more playing capacity without using more land.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and urged them to take the time to read the plan and supporting documents and submit their comments.

The plan and documents, as well as a video explaining the content of the plan and the consultation process were all available at <https://www.marlborough-tc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan> and hard copies of the plan could be provided for people with no access to the online documentation.