

Notes on Meeting 10th Feb 2026 Burford NP Sterring Group

Present : Corrine Hoge, Jenny Crave, Paul Newman, Geoff Haines, Malcolm Alsop, Elaine Alsop, Andrew Foster, Corrine Ash

The following summary details the initial strategic planning meeting (Stage 0) regarding the development of a **neighbourhood plan** for Burford and potentially Fulbrook. The committee explored community engagement strategies, the necessity of professional consultancy, and major infrastructural challenges, particularly concerning traffic and stakeholder collaboration with Burford School.

Strategic Objectives and the Neighbourhood Plan Process

The meeting established that a neighbourhood plan is primarily a **legal tool** designed to give the community weight in planning decisions and to secure increased **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** funding. Malcolm, a guest with experience in the process, explained that without a plan, a council might only receive 15% of CIL money from developments, whereas a formal plan increases this to 25%. However, he cautioned that these plans are often restrictive; they must align with **national and local planning frameworks** and cannot be overly prescriptive.

The committee discussed the "Stage 0" status, emphasizing that they are currently in a research and vision-building phase. They aim to create a **Community Action Plan** alongside the legal development plan to address "wouldn't it be nice if" projects—such as community signs or small-scale improvements—that fall outside the scope of formal planning law.

Lessons from Neighbouring Parishes

Committee members conducted research by visiting nearby councils, including Charbury, Woodstock, Chipping Norton, and Milton-under-Wychwood. Charlbury was highlighted as a model for being "**resident-led**," with high levels of community involvement in sustainability and traffic issues. Conversely, Chipping Norton provided a cautionary tale: their "first mistake" was paying for a consultant when they believed they had the skills to do much of the work themselves. However, Malcolm cautioned the need to have been led by a consultant who knows the language and how to "fill in the forms".

Other plans reviewed showed varying focuses; for instance, Woodstock's plan was described as "amazing" for its singular focus on **preserving green spaces**. These comparisons underscored the need for Burford to define its own unique "nuance," particularly in protecting its heritage and independent business character.

Community Engagement and the Digital Questionnaire

A major theme of the meeting was the "fishing expedition" to gauge resident priorities through a newly launched **community questionnaire**. Within its first week, the digital-only survey received approximately 60 responses. While the committee is prioritizing digital communication to streamline data collection, they acknowledged the need to reach non-digital residents, perhaps through paper copies at the Tolsey or via direct delivery for those with reduced mobility.

The survey initial data revealed a diverse community with varying needs:

- **Geographical Divide:** There is a notable difference in priorities between the "Hill" residents and those in newer developments like **Cotswold Gate**.
- **Demographics:** Younger residents in social housing or newer estates expressed a desire for a **supermarket**, whereas older residents in the town's historic centre often view Burford as a small, cohesive village.
- **Communication:** Many respondents indicated they would prefer regular email updates from the Town Hall.

To further boost engagement, the committee plans a significant presence at the **Burford Festival** in June, using stalls and potentially "balloons" to attract residents and capture "clean hands" feedback from those not already involved with the council.

The Critical Role of Burford School

Andrew reported on a strategic meeting with **David Cockfield**, the Business Manager of Burford School. As a major landowner with 31 acres, the school is a "regional asset" and a critical stakeholder, housing more pupils (approximately 1,300) than there are residents in the town.

The school faces significant **financial instability** due to restrictive central funding and the rising costs of maintaining aging facilities. Key points of collaboration include:

- **Sports Facilities:** The school dreams of an all-weather sports hub that could be segregated from the main campus to allow for **community use**.
- **Performing Arts:** There is a long-term vision to build a theatre to support their strong music and drama departments.
- **Traffic Flow:** A significant "chronic problem" is parent parking and traffic congestion. Parents often avoid the school's internal one-way system because they get trapped by departing coaches, leading them to park on private forecourts in town.

Infrastructural Challenges: Traffic and Parking

The committee identified **parking, HGV movement, and traffic congestion** as the town's most persistent issues. A potential solution discussed was the creation of a

transport hub at the current touring caravan site near the A40, which has about six years left on its lease. This site could serve as a dedicated coach park and school bus terminal, removing large vehicles from the high street.

There was also a discussion regarding **Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)**, similar to those used in Chipping Norton. While Burford is already a popular cycling hub, the committee questioned whether existing routes could be enhanced or if new circular walks could be established to support "no car tourism".

Preserving Town Character

A significant motivation for the neighbourhood plan is to **protect Burford from "formula" businesses** and national chains. Members noted that Burford currently lacks nail bars, bookies, and national fast-food outlets, which preserves its independent feel. The plan could include specific policies to prevent takeaway food establishments or national coffee brands from altering the town's character.

Furthermore, the committee emphasized the importance of **"protected views,"** such as the vista looking down the hill towards Fulbrook and the Windrush Valley, which are vital to the town's heritage status.

Professional Guidance and Funding

The committee debated the cost and necessity of hiring a **professional consultant**. Malcolm suggested that a consultant acts like a "driving instructor," navigating the legal hurdles to ensure the plan passes the final inspection. Estimated costs discussed ranged from **£13,000 to £25,000**, depending on how much work the committee performs themselves.

While some funding may be available from national or district sources, the committee was warned that many grants have recently been reduced or stopped. They decided to "pre-qualify" several consultants and seek multiple quotes, prioritizing those with experience in heritage-rich areas.

Collaboration with Fulbrook and Local Authorities

The possibility of a **joint plan with Fulbrook** was discussed. While Fulbrook residents rely on Burford as a "service centre," their council—consisting of only five members—has yet to formally agree to the proposal. Fulbrook representatives indicated they need to understand the structural involvement and costs before committing.

Additionally, the committee stressed the need to engage with **Oxfordshire County Council**, particularly regarding land they own near the A40, and the **West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)**, which ultimately "rubber stamps" the plan.

Administrative and Operational Actions

The committee is utilizing modern tools, such as **AI-driven transcription and summarization**, to document their meetings efficiently.

Immediate Next Steps:

- **Draft an article for "The Bridge"** to inform residents about Stage 0 and the availability of paper surveys. **Action : Corrine H**
- **Invite David Cockfield** (Burford School) to a future meeting. **Action Andrew**
- **Distribute the questionnaire** to all local businesses and stakeholders. **Action Paul**
- **Conduct pre-qualification research** on potential consultants. **Action Geoff**
- **Coordinate with the Burford Festival** organizers for a public launch event.
- **Engage with Brize Norton/ Isle of Wight** re their NP experience **Action Jenny**
- **Engage with WODC** re NP and likely effect of unity authority change **Action Geoff**
- **Find sponsor/donor/funds** to defray consulting costs **Action Paul**

The next meeting is confirmed for **Wednesday, 25th February at 9:00 a.m.. Venue TBC**