

2nd Meeting of Sunningwell Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

7:30 to 9:00pm, Tuesday 9th Dec 2025, Sunningwell Village Hall

Present:

Judy Aspinall, Lindsay Judson, Karen Laister, Diana Lugova Debbie Neal, Mike Osborne, Emily Smith, representatives of Working Groups and other residents of the Parish.

Minutes - DRAFT

1. The Chair (Mike Osborne) welcomed residents of the Parish, the representatives of the 5 Working Groups, Diana Lugova (OCC) and Emily Smith (VOWH). He noted that Judy Aspinall was the Deputy Chair, and that the other members of the Steering Group were Karen Laister, Debbie Neal, and Lindsay Judson. He welcomed Lindsay to his first meeting of the Steering Group: it was agreed that Lindsay would serve as acting Secretary until the Parish Council made a formal appointment in January.
2. The Chair said that the Steering Group would like to take photos of attendees looking at the Working Groups' maps, etc., for use in the Neighbourhood Plan documentation, and asked if anyone did not wish their photo to be taken. No one objected.
3. The Minutes of the Previous Meeting were agreed.
4. The Chair gave an update Current Status based on Briefing Note 1 which was circulated before the meeting. There was a wide support for a Neighbourhood Plan in the Parish, and so the Parish Council had agreed that there should be one. Five Working Groups had been set up, and each had now met several times (see Minute 5).

He said that a number of external factors meant that we should proceed as expeditiously as we could. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill would mean that more decisions would be taken by planning officials on the basis of Plans, so that without a Neighbourhood Plan we might, in his opinion, have less of a voice. Large developments are taking place in the surrounding area, and we need to be ready to respond to the impact of these. We owed it to the community to have made substantial progress by the time of the next Annual Parish Meeting and the next Annual Meeting of the Parish

Council in May. The Steering Group expected some material from each Working Group by the end of December.

5. A representative of each Working Group gave a short presentation based on large-scale maps and other materials.
 - Duncan Graham (Heritage and Character WG) said that the Group was focusing on the unique heritage and character of the Parish with a view to protecting, preserving and enhancing it for the benefit of residents, visitors and future generations. He showed the meeting a map highlighting buildings and other features of historic or architectural interest, important sight lines, etc., as well as some Iron Age pottery fragments he had found in Boars Hill.
 - Bob Evans (Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Wildlife WG) said that the group was focusing on geological and environmental features and animal species, as well as important features such as orchards, hedgerows, and gardens. While none of the Parish had protected status as, e.g., an SSI, it had much of interest and value.
 - Robert Chorley (Footpaths and Active Travel WG) explained how its map showed existing rights of way and bridlepaths together with some paths that are not rights of way. The Group was focusing walking these routes to establish their condition, and was considering which of these routes needed to be improved, where new pavements and new rights of way were desirable, and more generally how to improve connectivity between the various parts of the Parish for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.
 - Liz Delacave (Planning WG) focused on a map showing the major housing developments to the south and west of the Parish. The Group is seeking to understand what residents and visitors value about the Parish and how planning policies can best protect and enhance these things in the context of these developments.
 - Liz Browne (Traffic and Transport WG) focused on the same map, and expressed concerns about the impact of these developments on levels of traffic going through the Parish to get to Oxford and stopping in the Parish as more people wanted to enjoy its cultural and natural amenities.

6. Comments from VOWH & OCC

- Cheryl Soppet (VOWH Planning Policy Officer (Neighbourhood Planning)) sent her apologies. The Chair reported that she strongly supported the Plan, and that she was happy for any member of any Working Group to contact her directly if they have any questions. Her contact details are:

Telephone: 01235 422600

Email: cheryl.soppet@southandvale.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans>

She had also told the Chair that VoWH is producing a Template for Neighbourhood Plans, which should be available shortly.

- Emily Smith (VOWH District Councillor) suggested that the Footpaths and Active Travel WG look at the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, as it was important to know about connections with what was happening outside the Parish. The process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan will result in the formulation of a number of goals for the Parish. Not all of these will belong in the Plan NP, but the ones that are left out will still form a valuable “To Do” list which might be achieved by other means. It was very important to have a ‘shopping list’ so as to be ready for any grant or section 106 money which might become available. For this reason she thought that we should formulate the Plan quickly, and noted that it would not be set in stone, as we were obliged to review it every 5 years.
- Diana Lugova (OCC County Councillor) said that was important to get to know about OCC’s vision for Oxfordshire; different officers were responsible for different topics.

In the discussion that followed, the points made included: we should be clear about everything we wanted, and we needed therefore to establish what residents wanted. Emily Smith could advise on what was or was not in scope of the Plan. Our roads are often footpaths as well, so a large increase in vehicle traffic might completely change the character of our neighbourhood.

7. Future action: the Chair referred to Briefing Note 2.

- Working Groups, engagement and dissemination: there was a discussion of what remained to be done. Each Group might work differently, though the Steering Group would find the presentation of their work in a similar format (e.g. Inventory, Aims and Objectives, Evidence) very helpful. It was agreed that there was much to do to establish

what the residents of the Parish wanted and valued. It was agreed that there should be a consolidated questionnaire, and that each Working Group would be asked to provide 5-10 (preferably open) questions that they would like to pose to the Parish [Action SG]. The resulting questionnaire might be put online, leafleted to houses, given to walkers, accessed by QR codes posted around the Parish, etc. The Working Groups and other residents of the Parish were asked to make suggestions for parishioner engagement activities. In the discussion which followed there was strong support for the idea of a drop-in day in the Village Hall, and/or a 'roadshow' in a number of different venues with the Working Groups' maps, photos, and other material. It would be good to involve those who live outside the Parish but come into it to walk, play cricket, visit the Flowing Well, etc.

- There was also a discussion as whether there were any significant gaps in the scope covered by the Working Groups. The Steering Group would consider this [Action SG]. The point was made that flooding issues fell under Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Wildlife; civic amenities under Heritage and Character; pavements under Footpaths and Active Travel.
- Naming and branding: it was agreed that it was important not to suggest that the Plan was only about Sunningwell village, and that ideally all four parts of the Parish should get a mention in the title and/or 'logo'. The Chair invited comments and suggestions to be sent to him.
- Drafting Neighbourhood Plan: the next meeting of the Steering Group was planned for the second week of January 2026. The Group would take stock of the material it had been sent by the Working Groups before then.

Lindsay Judson