

Wedmore Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Terms of Reference

Background

Neighbourhood planning can give communities such as Wedmore direct power to develop a shared vision for our neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of our local area. A Neighbourhood Plan enables us to choose where we want new homes, shops and offices to be built, to have our say on what those new buildings should look like, which open spaces should be protected and what infrastructure should be provided. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools to ensure that we get the right types of development for our community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right which communities in England can choose to use. We may decide that we could achieve the outcomes we want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating our proposals for the neighbourhood into the Local Plan, or through other planning mechanisms such as Local Development Orders and supplementary planning documents or through pre-application consultation on development proposals. Wedmore Parish Council believes the community should discuss the different choices available to define and then to achieve our ambitions for our neighbourhood.

Accordingly Wedmore Parish Council has decided that the option of a Neighbourhood Plan should be explored and to that end it has established a Steering Group to establish whether or not the Parish wants a Neighbourhood Plan and, if it proves to be the case, to oversee the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Purpose and Mission Statement

The purpose of the Steering Group is to establish whether the Parish of Wedmore wishes to establish a Neighbourhood Plan and, if it is the case, to develop and oversee a process that will result in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish in order to:

“Preserve and enhance the built, natural and historical environments of the local area and the distinctive character of the Parish of Wedmore, whilst allowing for sustainable economic and social growth and development” in accordance with the principles of the Sedgemoor Local Plan.

The process will be open and inclusive. This means offering the opportunity for everyone who lives or works in the Parish to contribute to the plan. This includes identifying the important aspects of life in Wedmore, Theale, Blackford and the rural area which we want to preserve, and designing policies which ensure future land development is both sustainable and in line with the vision and desire of our community.

Constitution

1. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (“The Steering Group”) is an advisory committee to the Wedmore Parish Council under the terms of Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and subject to Wedmore Parish Council Standing Orders (“Standing Orders”).
2. Membership of the Steering Group shall be drawn from the elected members of Wedmore Parish Council and members of the public who live or work in the parish
3. The Steering Group shall comprise no more than 20 persons
4. The Steering Group shall elect a Chair and Deputy Chair from their number

5. The Steering Group shall not have the power to exercise any authority on behalf of the Parish Council.
6. The Steering Group shall only incur expenditure against a budget approved by the Parish Council. All such expenditure shall be re-imbursed by the Parish Clerk against an authorised Expenditure Claim Form (form 001 in appendix).

Tasks

The Steering Group will:

7. Prepare a project plan for implementing the Purpose defined above
8. Canvass opinion in the Parish to gather answers to at least five key questions. These are:
 - What is good about the area?
 - What is bad about the area?
 - What needs to change?
 - What is your vision for the Parish of Wedmore over the next 25 years?
 - Do you want a Neighbourhood Plan?
9. If the response indicates that a majority of residents who responded consider that a Neighbourhood Plan is desirable, make that recommendation to the Parish Council.
10. On receiving instructions from the Parish Council proceed with the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, specifically:
 - Build an evidence base as a foundation for the Plan.
 - Work in close cooperation with Wedmore Parish Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, The Environment Agency, Highways, and other relevant bodies
 - Create a set of land use policies derived from and informed by the survey and evidence base above
 - Communicate and engage with the community throughout the process, ensuring transparency
 - Ensure that the policies fit with the District Council's strategic planning framework
 - Arrange for the plan to be written
 - Submit the plan for independent examination
 - Submit the plan to referendum
 - Manage such budget as is allocated
 - The Chair or deputy Chair will liaise with Wedmore Parish Council on a regular basis

Meetings

11. The Steering Group shall meet at regular intervals, at a minimum every three months.
12. Meeting dates and times will be advised to the Parish Clerk by the Chair or Deputy Chair.
13. The meetings shall be advertised, conducted and minuted in accordance with Standing Orders.