



# **Pilning & Severn Beach Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Issue 3.**

#### **1. Purpose**

1.1 The Steering Group's purpose is to produce, design, implement and oversee the Neighbourhood Plan process in order that this will then progress to Independent Examination and a successful community referendum and ultimately be adopted by South Gloucestershire Council. It is also intended to be used to determine planning applications as part of the adopted South Gloucestershire Development Plan.

Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council is the 'Qualifying Body' having designated to start Stage 1 of the process, the Parish as the Neighbourhood Plan Area and notified South Gloucestershire Council of the intention to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council has established a separate Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group which is responsible for leading the process and developing the plan. Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council will be responsible for submitting the Neighbourhood Plan

1.2 In undertaking this role, the Steering Group is established having full delegated authority from the Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council to deliver its plan-making functions up to and including publication of a pre-submission draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. The role is to:

A. Ensure that Neighbourhood Planning legislation, as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), are followed in the preparation and submission of the Neighbourhood Plan. Including:

Stage 1: Getting Started - building an evidence base, publicity and engagement

Stage 2: Preparing the plan - drafting the Neighbourhood Plan, meeting the basic conditions and pre-submission consultation

Stage 3: Bringing the plan into force – submission, publicity, independent examination and referendum Note: the scope for any involvement of the Steering Group in Stage 3 will be determined by the Parish Council

- B. Set out a project timetable, featuring key milestones, and a budget for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.
- C. Meet regularly to agree actions and discuss issues that arise, in order that the process is dealt with in an efficient and timely manner.
- D. Seek appropriate funding to meet the costs of developing the plan, as might be required.
- E. Plan, manage and monitor expenditure incurred in the preparation of the plan and report back to the Parish Council, and when appropriate Locality, on these matters.
- F. Report regularly to the Parish Council on progress with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and to recommend the proposed content of the Plan.

- G. Utilise its delegated authority to make decisions for the development of the Plan, and to seek formal agreement by the Parish Council for any key decisions.
- H. Seek to gather the views of the whole community, including residents, groups, businesses, landowners etc., in order to inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, allowing opinions and ideas to be put forward by all.
- I. Liaise with South Gloucestershire Council and other relevant authorities and organisations in order to make the plan as effective as possible and to ensure that it remains in conformity with local and national planning legislation.
- J. Gather baseline information / evidence to support the preparation of the Plan.
- K. Decide upon and, if required, set up sub-groups to gather statistics, information and views, subject to this being agreed and delegated by the full Steering Group.
- L. Commission a Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or any other assessments as might be appropriate, and work with the SPP&SA Team where a Habitat Regulations Assessment is required;
- M. Be responsible for the analysis of evidence gathered from the community and elsewhere;
- N. Develop local policies, and produce the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3 In undertaking these steps the Steering Group will be able to demonstrate that they have met the basic conditions set out in planning guidance.

## **2. Membership**

2.1 At the first meeting the group will elect: a chairperson, a vice-chair, a secretary, and a treasurer.

2.2 The Steering Group should ideally consist of a maximum of 12 members, with representatives from Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council, together with co-opted members from the community (residents and businesses, as applicable).

2.3 Members must live or work in the designated neighbourhood area.

2.4 A person living outside the neighbourhood area, but running an established local business may be invited to join, subject to there being no conflict of interest as defined by Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council arrangements.

2.5 The Steering Group shall be quorate when at least half of the members attend, and provided that Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council is represented.

2.6 South Gloucestershire Council planning officers, representing the Local Planning Authority (LPA), cannot be voting members of the Steering Group, but are able to attend meetings and contribute to the discussions as might be necessary.

2.7 All members of the Steering Group must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership or interest in land or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group.

2.8 New members shall complete and sign an application form to join the group and shall be accepted into the Steering Group by majority vote at a Steering Group Meeting.

2.9 As well as full members, the secretary shall maintain a 'correspondence list' of residents that have registered to be kept informed and receive updates and newsletters about the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.9.a Those on the correspondence list should be copied into distribution of final notices of forthcoming Steering Group meetings and be notified of significant up-dates to information on the website.

2.9.b The Steering Group may agree from time to time to send other documents or information to those on the 'correspondence list'.

2.10 The Steering Group shall have the ability to remove a member of the group should by majority vote they decide it is not beneficial to have the member in the group. Members are expected to be actively involved and regularly attend meetings. Members missing four consecutive meetings shall be approached to determine whether their continued membership is appropriate.

### **3. Meetings**

3.1 The Steering Group shall meet every month, or as required. Notice of Steering Group meetings shall be given to its members, by email or post, at least five working days in advance of the meeting date. Notices must include details of the matters to be discussed. A draft agenda shall be distributed to members for review and agreed and redistributed, prior to the meeting.

3.2 Decisions on operational matters (relating to the process of preparing the Plan) shall be determined by a majority of votes of the Steering Group members present and voting. In the case of an equal number of votes, the chairperson shall have a casting vote.

3.3 Decisions on the final content of the pre-submission draft Neighbourhood Development Plan shall be made by the Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council, following consideration of recommendations made by the Steering Group.

3.4 The Steering Group quorum necessary to conduct business shall be a minimum of five members including two officers.

3.5 The Steering Group may agree to allow devolved responsibility to individuals or sub-groups to progress areas of work and make decisions on behalf of the Steering Group. Such instances shall be recorded in meeting minutes identifying the scope and responsibilities.

3.6 The secretary should circulate draft minutes for review to members of the Steering Group not more than 7 days after each meeting. Any proposed changes should be made using tracked changes for consolidation into a clean copy for acceptance at the

next meeting. Minutes should be concise, recording progress on the topics of discussion, decisions made and actions raised.

3.7 The public can observe the meeting and speak at the Chairperson's discretion.

3.8 Task and finish or theme groups will arrange their own meetings and decisions from these groups should be relayed back to the full Steering Group for ratification and/or information. Each working group should have a nominated chair, but this person does not have to be a member of the Steering Group. Working groups do not have the power to authorise expenditure on behalf of the Steering Group.

3.9 From time to time other stakeholders or interested parties may be invited to attend a specific Steering Group meeting to give a presentation and/or discuss their interest in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **4. Finance**

4.1 The treasurer shall keep a clear record of expenditure, where necessary, supported by receipted invoices. Members of the Steering Group, or a working group, may claim back an expenditure that was necessarily incurred during the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan, provided that such expenditure has been agreed in advance by the Steering Group. This could include postage, stationery, telephone calls, travel costs, childcare costs etc. The procedure for claiming and rates for these expenses shall be drawn up by the treasurer and agreed by the Steering Group.

4.2 The treasurer will report back to the Steering Group on planned and actual expenditure for the project and liaise with Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council's Clerk to set up a system to enable payment of invoices to be made, as required.

4.3 If expenditure is desired in excess of the available grant funding obtained by the Steering Group, this will need to be decided upon and agreed by Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council.

4.4 The funds of the Neighbourhood Plan shall be held in the relevant bank account of Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council, which is administered by the Clerk of the Parish Council. Any payments from the Neighbourhood Plan funds shall require the approval of the Steering Group Treasurer.

4.5 Members of the Steering Group are volunteers and are not paid for their work. It is necessary for the Parish Clerk to carry out the following activities on behalf of the Steering Group:

- Modifications and up-load of information to the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website
- Administration of access to the shared drive for non-Councillor members
- Transaction of monies from the Parish Council bank account.

The Parish Clerk will be paid for only these Steering Group activities, which will be funded directly by the Parish Council.

## **5. Documents and Communication**

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group shall set up an area on the Parish Council website for informing the community of their activities. The website shall include:

- Scope and introduction to the Neighbourhood Plan
- A list of Steering Group members, their roles and method of contact
- Progress to-date and next steps
- Agreed minutes of full Steering Group meetings
- Agreed documents that the Steering Group considers should be in the public domain

Working documents as well as issued documents shall be stored on a shared drive, which will allow multiple Steering Group members to work on documents simultaneously. Access to the shared drive will be given by the Parish Clerk to new Steering Group members when their completed application form has been accepted. Parish Councillors who are not Steering Group Members will have access to the shared drive, but should be limited to read only.

## **6. Data Protection**

6.1 The Steering Group is the 'Data Controller' and shall be responsible for handling any personal data it has obtained as part of the Neighbourhood Plan preparations in accordance with the associated guidance of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

6.2 Personal data includes details such as name, address, telephone number and email address (with telephone numbers and email addresses being personally provided).

6.3 In brief, the personal data must be:

- Collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes for which they are processed
- Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- Kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the data are processed
- Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate measures

## **7. Freedom of Information**

7.1 Transparency in decision making at all stages of the Neighbourhood Plan processes is essential. Therefore there is an expectation that any material that is used (either positively or negatively) or collected to inform the neighbourhood plan (in particular consultation material) must be available for public inspection in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations.

## **8. Changes to the Terms of Reference**

8.1 These Terms of Reference may be altered and additional clauses added by agreement, shown by majority vote, of the Steering Group.

## **9. Dissolution of the Group**

9.1 If the members of the Steering Group agree by a majority vote to dissolve the group on completion of the Plan or sooner, if progress is not being made in accordance with the approved timetable, this decision must be ratified by Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council.

## **10. Approval of the Terms of Reference**

Issue 1 of the Terms of Reference was approved by the Steering Group on 15/02/2021 and at Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council meeting on 1/03/2021.

Issue 2 of the Terms of Reference was approved by the Steering Group on 20/07/2021 and at Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council meeting on 6/9/2021.

Issue 3 of the Terms of Reference was approved by the Steering Group on 15/02/2022 and at Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council meeting on 7/3/2022.