

Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Revision Group 2025

Steering group meeting 28th October 2025, at Tenter Piece

Agenda and minutes (2 pages)

Attending: Michael Sherman (Chair), Danielle Twitchen, Tracey Brinkley, David Theobold, Carroll Reeve

Apologies: Alison Bourne, Ryan Cracknell. Savannah Bourne. Jack Norman, Charles Posner

Minutes of previous meeting agreed.

Matters arising: Full SHLAA now deferred by BMSDC until second call for sites made in the New Year. Survey document was made available to the PC Clerk on the Monday preceding the last PC meeting. This was not circulated. Leaving M Sherman to circulate to the PC in early September.

Financial update: Invoice from lead adviser sent to Clerk for payment, confirmation awaited that this has been paid (£1,016).

Budget:

A Budget for the NP Revision process had been circulated. This was discussed. The need to accelerate the production of base line data was highlighted. There may be variables as with all budgets. In particular, the attitude of parish councillors and any changes in regulations and good practice. It was agreed to submit this to the PC. In summary it amounts to £33,535, over a 3/4-year period. An interim budget of £15,000 had been agreed with the PC previously. This covers the need to produce a wide range of information to ensure that a qualitative information base is available from which the production of a robust NP will follow.

Draft Survey questionnaire:

Points were raised by parish councillors at its meeting and afterwards. Bearing in mind that the document had been available for comment well in advance of their meeting it was at best unfortunate that it took some of them a month to respond.

Please remember that this survey document was produced by a specialist in this field of survey of work. It was tested by the NP Revision group, its lead advisor, and a pilot group of 20 households across the village (and from different walks of life and age groups).

In addition, previous reports and minutes of both the PC and this group were overlooked by some PC members.

General contextual observations on the PC comments

The general aim of this survey questionnaire is to gain the views of the target audience, in our case village residents as a whole and to capture information relevant to them at this time. An initial survey, however, does not preclude carrying out further surveys and seeking informed opinions in other formats, such as drop-in events. At this time, it needs to be recognised that the survey document needs to be focussed and short.

To avoid confusion and limit the size of this survey the open-ended box at Q7, will be removed and the ability for respondents to add a commentary by attaching a separate sheet of paper will be underscored.

A further point relates to the need or otherwise of adding a 'no opinion' or similar box to questions. This ignores good practice in the production of quality surveys. Empirical evidence based on tried and tested survey methodology frowns upon this as it accepts a lack of enquiry by respondents. In addition, a fifth and non-committal option may lead to a soft or easy response, bearing in mind that the objective is to elicit a view. In any event, the survey offers the option to respondents of leaving or not completing a question, with the subtle message included in the instructions to 'Please try to answer all questions.'. This may

be too subtle for some and could again benefit from underscoring or reinforcing. At least one parish councillor agreed with this sentiment at the 2nd October PC meeting. Some parish councillors considered that the NP Revision should be delayed until the JLP was complete. This ignores the need to react in a timely manner to the JLP as it evolves and from a factual base.

Specific questions by PC members

Some parish councillors thanked the Revision group for the opportunity to reflect upon the survey document.

A councillor raised at the October meeting the need to include defined views and heritage assets. Defined views are included within the adopted Landscape Assessment, so do not need to be included in the survey document. None of the questions are limited to heritage assets and thus include all assets/buildings. In addition, heritage assets are already protected by other existing mechanisms.

In March BMSDC issued at a presentation (not attended by any Lavenham parish councillor) heavily caveated raw data based on central government's aim to build 1.5 million new homes. Fortunately, a member of the NP Revision team was invited, and to participate by giving a presentation. Two councillors have raised the issue of releasing this raw data. Raw data is just that raw: no more. At this time, we do not know the level of any new housing in Lavenham. There will, no doubt, be some, but to put a number on this is highly likely to be wrong and at this time confusing. It also runs risks of diverting attention away from the aim of the survey. Central government's *target* above was known before the NP2 document was issued and no reference was included in that or any related document.

A parish councillor asked why a new school site should be included in Q4. Bear in mind that our existing school is full to capacity. The catchment area is also larger than this parish and covers a wide geographic area. Failure to consider a new school could be viewed as short-sighted. Children from Lavenham already attend schools outside the village.

The inclusion of a care home option within Q4, will be included.

We will reinforce the nature of this survey which is aimed at residents and residential use. The introduction to the survey will be drafted to make this clear. Reference to wider economic activities is less relevant and may be covered in a specific survey drafted with the business community.

It was suggested that the status of Lavenham parish remaining as a village or a town be included. Legally, it makes no difference. This may be something the parish council wish to progress. Especially, as it requires a full explanation and may require a referendum.

At Q3 the word 'should' is seen as ambiguous and this will be redrafted.

A general point was made about future infrastructure and services/amenities. This survey is not aimed at addressing all issues at this time. Further down the line and once the NP Revision has progressed: these issues can be addressed.

Punctuation will be addressed across the survey document.

It was agreed that the survey would now need to be delayed until the New Year. The survey process includes drop-in events and newsletters to help deliver a high return rate. Taken in the round by pushing it back would avoid the darker nights and the Christmas period.

AoB

It was proposed by M Sherman and seconded by D Twitchen to ask R Cracknell to stand down from this group, as he had yet to attend a meeting.

To distribute a Newsletter before Christmas to residents and include it in Lavenham Life.

Next meeting: to be arranged.