

WEYMOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WALK REPORT 14/8/2021 10.00 to 12.25

Present: Cllr David Northam (Deputy Chair of Steering Group), Colin Marsh (Steering Group), Peter Dye (Steering Group Deputy), Cllr Anne Weaving (Steering Group), Phil Watts (Steering Group), Penny Quilter (Steering Group Deputy), Cllr Tony Ferrari (Weymouth Town Councillor for Preston Ward), 12 local residents (2 more joined half way round and 4 left at varying times along the way).

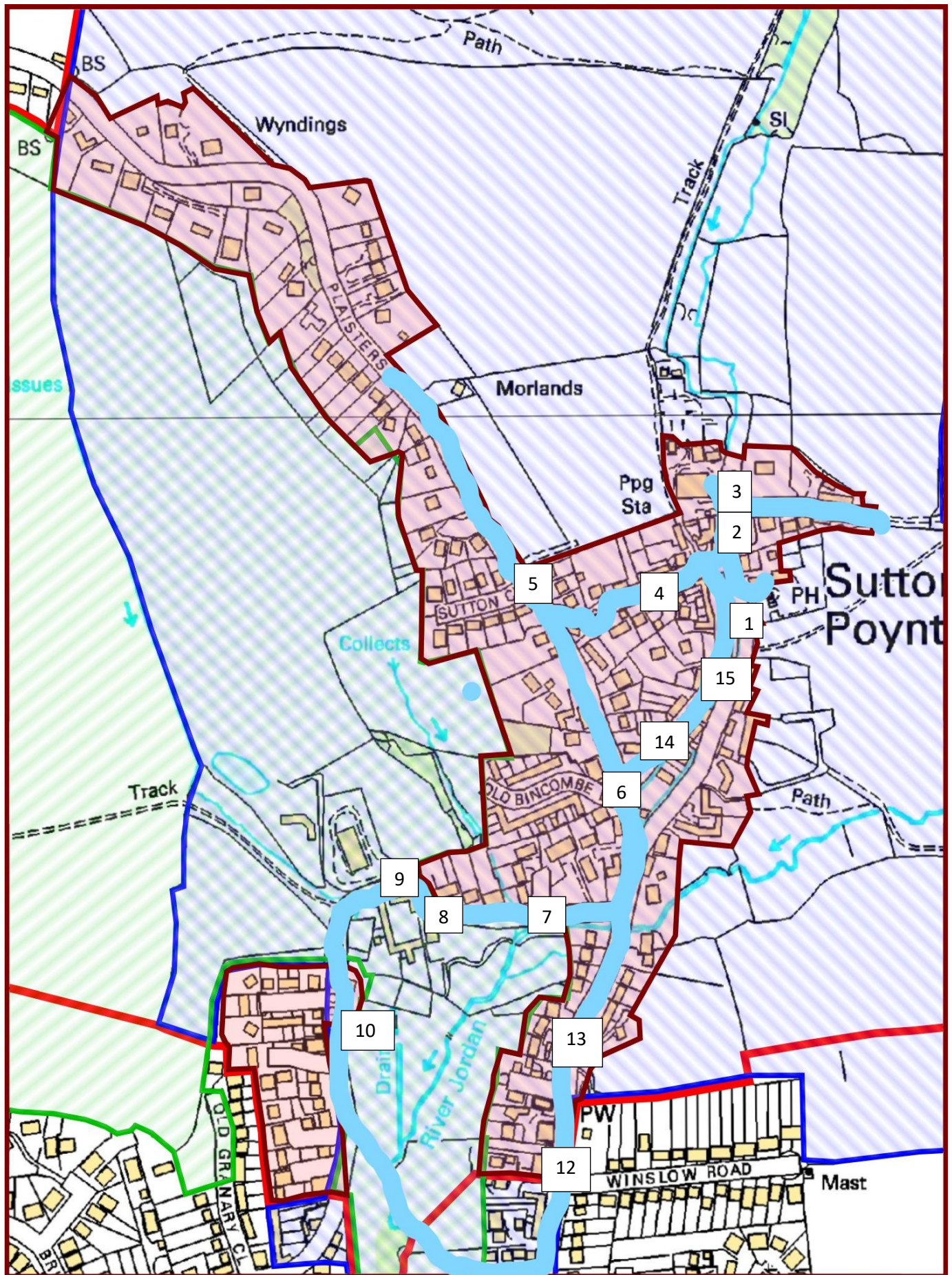
The Steering Group members and Councillors present introduced themselves. CM outlined the background and purpose of the visit which was primarily for members of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to become familiar with the area covered by the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan, the issues that influenced policies within the latter and provide an opportunity for the public to engage with the Weymouth NP process and influence policy outcomes within that wider plan.

PD outlined the possible impact on the village particularly the proposed 'Call for Sites' and the fact that this would likely lead to development outside of the Defined Development Boundary.

It was noted that as the Neighbourhood Plan developed there would be disagreements and compromise would be necessary with the need to reach a consensus that would ultimately have to be supported by a majority at the referendum.

A level of concern amongst residents about the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan undermining the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan following the significant amount of work done by members of this community was expressed by members of the public to members of the Steering Group during the walkabout.

Sutton Poyntz Circular Walk from the Springhead Pub - Itinerary



Stopping Point 1: Noted that the Springhead Pub was the main employer in Sutton Poyntz and a key focal point of considerable social importance to the community.

Protection - Protection of the Springhead is covered by Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan policy SR1 (Protection of Community Assets) and Aspiration AP 5.6.1 (Registration as Assets of Community Value). The later needs to be enacted by the Qualifying Body. Conservation Area designation

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - The success of the pub business in recent years has created other issues such as vehicle access congestion and on street parking by the mill pond. An attempt had been made to address this with a Car Park policy; this had met with considerable resistance from the former local authority due to the perceived impact on the AONB and a more general policy within the Neighbourhood Plan had been rejected at the final submission stage by the Inspector.

Stopping Point 2: Noted that a key characteristic of the area were the 'lanes' (White Horse Lane, Mission Hall Lane, Plaisters Lane and Puddledock Lane) which formed the backbone of the village and that the absence of raised pavements added to the distinctive character of the area. This character has been retained in the face of the significant development that has occurred in the last 40 years. A contrast was made with some of the later (1960s onwards) developments off Plaisters Lane and along south Puddledock Lane where these features had been incorporated. The community had expressed a preference for no formal pavements but with the need for modern street lighting in areas of future development. Members of the public raised the issue of the declining bus service and the inadequate road maintenance – neither can be addressed within Neighbourhood Plan policy but can be included as aspirations.

Protection – Pavements and lighting are covered by Policy GA 1.3 (under Transport Needs and New Development) of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan. Conservation Area designation.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Divided community opinion as to the need for street lights versus energy consumption and dark skies concerns.

Stopping Point 3: Noted the Waterworks operational site and Local Green Space designation of Wessex Water land to the north which had been agreed by the landowner once the implications had been fully understood and caveats applied to the policy. This site raised the general issue of possible conversion of redundant industrial buildings for residential use. Small scale tourism had been proposed with local volunteers manning the waterworks museum and this had been rejected for reasons of risk liability associated with an operational site. This remained an aspiration (AP 5.2.4); several residents commented on the excellent co-operation from Wessex Water for educational group visits.

Protection – Local Green Space is covered by Policy BNE 2 of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Where local green space is proposed ensure that landowners (particularly where private land is involved) are fully consulted at an early stage and that they and the community as a whole understand the implications and limitations of this designation.

Stopping Point 4: On Mission Hall Lane it was noted that the route so far had been within the Historic Core Character Area (as defined within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan and

Place Appraisal). The Mission Hall and Orchard at the rear are a vital and well used community facility for social interaction both within and by hirers from outside the village.

Protection - Protection of the Mission Hall is covered by Policy SR1(Protection of Community Assets) of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan and Aspiration AP 5.6.1 (Registration as Assets of Community Value) The Mill Pond, 'Village Green' and Mission Hall Orchard are protected as Local Green Space under Policy BNE 2. Conservation Area designation.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Transition from the Historic Core to more modern housing styles in the West Side and Plaisters Lane North Character Areas was noted. Also noted the loss of allotments along Mission Hall Lane to meet housing needs and use of a site at the western end where a relatively recent house build had replaced a former garage site.

Stopping Point 5: Discussed key views towards the Chalk Escarpment of the AONB and how these had been blocked by an access gate.

Protection – Communities should discuss opportunities for identifying key views within and into the defined Neighbourhood Area. See Policy H & P 3.1 of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan. AONB and Conservation Area designation.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Ensure that chosen views are based upon those of importance to the whole community and not restricted to individual preferences. Recognise that key views can be compromised by the legitimate actions of a landowner such as for security reasons

Stopping Point 6: The group viewed housing along Old Bincombe Lane built in the 1970's for workers from the Winfrith site and some member of the public considered this to be well designed as a result of the 'village' employing the services of an architect at the time. It was recognised that different viewpoints existed and may well change over time regarding style, for example the preference for locally quarried stone against modern cut stone substitutes

Discussed affordable housing provision and the need for smaller homes of 1-2 bedroom size to allow for downsizing and free up larger family homes. One villager commented on the need for more affordable housing.

Flooding in this area was mentioned and attention drawn to the policy within the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan regarding control of surface water run-off from properties which collected in the zoned flood areas in the valley bottom.

Protection – Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan policy H&P 2 Housing Numbers and Size and H&P 4 Flood Prevention.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Contrast the wide road and green verges with the cut stone and pavements.

Identifying adequate capacity for new build within the Defined Development Boundary versus pressure to build outside of this. The Sutton Poyntz Steering Group had decided not to issue a 'Call for Sites' following consultation with stakeholders.

Stopping Point 7: Puddledock Lane is part of the Historic Core and along with the listed Sutton House is interspersed with small scale 1980's residential developments. The Green Corridor which follows the stream in this area is important for its biodiversity value. Attempt to include Local Green Space as designated buffer zones whilst accepted by the local authority at formal consultation were rejected by the Inspector on the grounds that adequate protection

already existed and the focus on wildlife as the reason for designation was not sufficiently persuasive.

Protection - Sutton Pony Neighbourhood Plan policies BNE 1.3 and 1.4 relating to impact of development within the Green Corridor. Conservation Area designation.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Ensure that the scope, impact (e.g. financial impact for private landowners) and reasons for potential designations as Local Green Space are fully understood by all parties and that consultation takes place at a very early stage in the process. The criteria for designation of LGS need to be fully understood and communicated prior to identification of possible sites. It is important to make clear the distinction between LGS and open space

Stopping Point 8: Noted attractive architectural design of Puddledock Cottages (1890). Discussed experience of designated and non-designated Heritage Assets listing and the concerns raised by homeowners..

Protection - In Conservation areas such as this consider a detailed conservation area assessment as opposed to a higher level overview in order that it is clear precisely which building and features the community wish to conserve. Recognise that owners and neighbouring property owners will have concerns as to restrictions and the impact on property values of any form of listing. An option for Weymouth to consider is appropriate protections under Designated Buildings of Townscape Merit and an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Ensure that the scope, impact (e.g. financial impact for private landowners) and reasons for potential designations are fully understood by both parties and that consultation takes place at a very early stage in the process. The criteria for designation need to be fully understood and communicated prior to identification of possible sites.

Stopping Point 9: Noted open views to the semi-distant valley farmland and Plaisters Lane to the north of Puddledock Lane and the east of Sutton Farm. Raised the question of the protection offered by the Important Open Gap designation.

Protection - Important Open Gap and Conservation Area designations. Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan Policy H & P 3 Key Views (View 4 from the path below Chalbury Hillfort).

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Pressure of housing demand on land outside the Defined Development Boundary. Implications of Littlemoor decision on designated protection?

Stopping Point 10: This is the Puddledock South Character Area where the non-adopted farm track that forms part of Puddledock Lane and which originally led to open fields (now a large housing estate in Preston) becomes a tarmac road surface with pavements (undertaken in the 1980's after the building of Sunnyfields) and with modern housing on the western side dating mainly from the early 1980's interspersed with occasional 18th/19th century agricultural dwellings. Also noted the 'Green Wedge' of the Important Open Gap at Willowbank Farm (not a working farm) which was considered for Local Green Space designation and advised against as not meeting the criteria by the consultants to the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. This protection is considered to be fragile but vital in providing the last remaining open space that truly defines the villages of Sutton Poyntz and Preston.

Protection - Important Open Gap and Conservation Area designations.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Consider the scope and strength of multiple designations? What additional protection will be afforded? Does this meet the needs of the community? Ensure that the criteria for Local Green Space – size of area, proximity to the community and value to the community as a whole (beauty or historical or amenity or wildlife) are satisfied.

Stopping Point 11: Followed the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Area boundary down an historical track into old Preston to the Bridge Inn noting the character of this much extended 18th century? building, the older former agricultural cottages opposite and the more distant Roman Bridge (probably medieval).

Protection - Conservation Area designation.

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned - Consider protection of the Bridge Inn as a community pub also much used by tourists from the local Caravan Parks. Importance of small scale tourism to the local economy.

Stopping Point 12: The walk continued via the historical back paths of old Preston with its tucked away cottages and gardens to Sutton Road turning north back towards Sutton Poyntz. Sutton Road itself retains remnants of the appearance of the characteristic lanes, being unpaved, despite the mixed housing that has been built here since the 1920's and which has increasingly brought with it high levels of on-street parking. Side roads opposite consist of later mixed housing with wider roads and pavement access. This is the Gateway Character Area. Note remaining buildings of significance such as the former Methodist Chapel and Old Bakery, both now converted to residential use. Contrast was made with the dominant three storey buildings on the high ground opposite. One SG member raised the issue of a village shop. This had been supported by a small majority in the village Stage 2 survey, those opposing it generally being concerned about the viability as a business given the strong local provision (Co-op and SPAR). A pop up shop in existing premises such as the pub selling local produce and manned by volunteers was considered the only viable option.

The low number of Solar Panels on roof tops was noted. There was no apparent appetite within the community at the time to include renewable energy in the Neighbourhood Plan based upon the Stage 1 survey.

Protection - Conservation Area designation (part). Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan Policy GA2 and Aspiration AP 5.3.3 (On-street Traffic Congestion) and 5.2.1(village shop)

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – How to reduce dependence on the motor car with the increasing loss of public transport services was highlighted. Walking along the road highlighted pedestrian access conflict with car usage. Congestion resulted from the creation of a single traffic lane. Extensive discussions had taken place with Dorset Council Highways Department regarding traffic control measures when collecting evidence for the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan. Consider the effectiveness of psychological measures versus signs and other passive traffic control measures which were not favoured by the community. Impact of multi-storey modern housing versus demand for housing space.

Provision of a shop has to consider viability given the very good local provision (Co-op and SPAR) and potential competition with these businesses which have significant local loyalty. Uncertainty over sufficient sustainable volunteer cover for a pop up shop and securing suitable premises.

Solar Panels were discussed. Visual impact and capital cost were the two main factors influencing this and some members of the public present commented on prohibitive initial cost, it also being noted that energy tariffs had been removed. In discussion the question was raised as to the increased costs of installing renewable energy sources during construction versus longer term energy bill savings.

The temporary (?) loss of the village bus service was noted and Cllr Northam made reference to the Dorset Council bus survey and agreed to forward the web link to CM for distribution. It was recognised that it would take a significant change in personal attitude to move away from reliance on the private car and that financial support alone would not necessarily be sufficient.

Stopping Point 13: Continue north to the old Evangelical Church (currently undergoing conversion to a residential property and a first test of the application of Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan policies?) and the key view from Sutton Knap. In an early 21st century small development off Sutton Road a resident commented that the demolition of two bungalows was originally to be replaced by three houses allowing for an open view at the end of the cul-de-sac but this had been occupied by an additional property following amended plans. It was mentioned that in this area there were a number of individual houses without architectural merit that could be demolished to make way for two homes to be built on the same site.

Protection – Conservation Area designation, Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan Policy H&P 2 (Housing Numbers and Size) and H&P 3 (Key view 3).

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Policies being ‘trumped’ by the Local Plan e.g. Charging Points? Acceptable density of building within the Defined Development Boundary.

Stopping Point 14: Entrance to Silver Street (a narrow lane probably of medieval origin). Discussion on how this important historical route could be protected as a street rather than the specific properties along that street. Noted the two listed buildings along here, one very large house now used as a second/holiday home.

Protection – Conservation Area designation. Aspiration 5.4.3 of the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan – production of a list of locally important heritage assets; requires action by the qualifying body..

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Concerns of owners of properties as to the impact on values of properties of non-designated heritage listing. Impact of non-occupancy of second homes versus housing demand versus viable planning policies to address this issue e.g. St Ives policy.

Stopping Point 15: The walk finished at the stone bridge at the south end of the mill pond whilst noting the key view across the temporary car park used by the Springhead pub and which had been favoured by a small majority of the community in a written survey as a permanent location for a village car park.

The walk ended at this point. An opportunity was provided to make any final comments and submit any individual notes. CM and DN thanked all of those present for their attendance and CM agreed to compile summary notes for the Steering Group.

Protection – Conservation Area designation, Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan policies H&P 3 (key view 1 and 2) and BNE 2 (Local Green Space designation).

Balancing Factors/Lessons Learned – Unsightly on-street car parking with the associated congestion and access difficulties versus a permanent car park. Availability of a suitable and

available site for the latter. Challenge of environmental impact on the AONB versus environmentally friendly construction and screening.