### North Marston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

### ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING REPORT 2021

The Steering Group has only been able to hold monthly “Zoom” meetings during the past 12 months, and, while we have made significant progress since the last Village Meeting Report, this has necessarily been at a much slower pace than we had contemplated a year ago.

In particular, our inability to carry out any form of collaborative outside research has hampered our progress greatly until very recently, and we have, of course, been unable to hold many face-to-face discussions with residents and stakeholders. This has resulted in the whole Neighbourhood Plan process taking much longer than either the Parish Council or the Steering Group would have wished, and I apologise for the frustrations the delays may have caused.

Nevertheless, since last year’s report, the Steering Group has completed all our fact finding and evidence-gathering, and we have produced sets of agreed objectives and draft policies in the four main areas covered by the Plan:

* + History and Heritage
  + Green Environment
  + Community and Sustainability
  + Built Environment (including Traffic and Transport)

We are now in the process of developing initial draft versions of the Neighbourhood Plan itself, and we intend to have an agreed final draft version of the text ready for discussion and comment by the Parish Council within the next month or two. After these consultations we will move on to producing the suggested text of the final Plan, for the Parish Council’s endorsement and acceptance.

The Group has also started work on devising a North Marston Design Code which will eventually be the recommended blueprint for the design and form of any new building in the parish. This project was started following Guidelines for Planning issued last year by central government which are aimed at giving communities a louder voice in the appearance of their surroundings. The Design Code will be published at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan and will be a formal annex to the Plan. Its contents will be referenced in relevant Plan Policies.

When both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Code have been finalised, a period of consultation with the parish community can begin. This lasts for a period of 6 weeks or more, and the Steering Group is intending to hold Open Parish Exhibitions during the consultation period to display and discuss the Plan with all residents and stakeholders, and, importantly, to receive representations about the Plan’s contents. The Group must consider these representations, and, if appropriate, make amendments as a result of them. The Plan will be available in both hard and soft copy versions throughout the consultation period.

We hope to have all consultation processes complete, and a final recommended Neighbourhood Plan ready for submission to statutory outside bodies by the end of 2021. A parish referendum could then follow in the first half of 2022.

All these timings, of course, are dependent upon the continued increased freedom from restrictions and, especially, that larger public meetings will be able to take place safely in the Village Hall.

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During the stresses of the past year, there have been many who have helped the Steering Group in our deliberations, and I would like to thank all of them – particularly John Spargo and the History Club Committee for their invaluable background information and evidence; Sally Chapman, our consultant, who has provided us with clear and cogent advice throughout; and Rachel Callender, the Parish Clerk, who has answered all our queries with great good humour.

Most of all, though, I must again thank my fellow Steering Group members for all their hard work, commitment, and time over the past 12 months, under extremely difficult circumstances, and whilst experiencing enormous outside pressures. Trevor Jenkins, Katherine du Plessis, Bev Davies, and, lately, Marie Cowen, have laboured (mostly) uncomplainingly, and I am grateful to them.

Michael Lane

Steering Group Chair

17 May 2021