

## **You had your say – here it is.....**

A huge thank you to everyone who filled in the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire – quite a task, we know, but we have gathered a tremendous amount of information. Almost 60% - 914 from a population of 1,563 – returned the adult questionnaire, and nearly 50% of the 150-strong 11-to-17 age group returned theirs.

It will take a while for the steering group to digest what you're all trying to tell us, especially because respondents wrote in several thousand comments along with the ticked boxes. You can see the raw results for yourselves on the two Survey Monkey sites that you can access via the Neighbourhood Plan website (address below). The comments are in monster drop-down boxes.

And, ta dah, the winner of the £100 adult prize draw is Caroline Tindale, and winner of the £50 youth prize is a Swadling child (sorry, not sure which). Congratulations.

Now for some highlights and trends from the results themselves, with these provisos – what interests me may not be your top priority, and some of the results themselves can be misleading since varying numbers answered each of the questions.

The housing section kicks off in a public-spirited way as 47% accept that the country needs more housing growth and that Deddington should take its fair share. And, indeed, 53% say the parish needs more development.

However, when it comes to the detail, a more anti-development spirit emerges. In all 81% (admittedly from a smaller pool of “voters”) think 50 homes are the maximum that should be built in the parish between now and 2031 – and those on sites of less than 30. From the written comments, it's clear infill-only is a popular (if unrealistic?) choice.

If there is to be new housing, what kind should it be? Two-three bedroom houses for sale were top of the list – then came substantial support for affordable housing, starter homes and accommodation for the elderly. When you take into account that 50% of the people who answered the questionnaire were aged 60 or over, it is perhaps not surprising that a wish to downsize in years to come featured quite strongly.

Traditional tastes emerged in the style of housing favoured: stone-built, in sympathy with the conservation area. A handful spoke up for high quality contemporary design. Walnut Close – a development of 10 detached, stone houses in Clifton – was the runaway winner in the pick-an-estate picture question. Another preference, that emerged from the Environment section, was that any new development should be plentifully planted with trees.

At first, it's heart-warming to read the Community section of the questionnaire and realise how content people are with life in Deddington parish and the

countryside around it, and how highly they value the assets we have – the health centre, the playgrounds, the school, pre-school and nursery, the church, the pubs, the Windmill Centre, the Castle Grounds. And it's clear from the added comments that the shops, the post office – the sheer convenience of Deddington – are hugely important too. "It's all here," says one. "Safe, peaceful beautiful," says another.

Then you come to the section – How could the facilities be improved? – and the suggestions and criticisms pour in. It's the Windmill Centre that takes a hammering. "Soviet-style" is the cruellest cut – "desperately in need of new kitchen, new loos and a makeover," says another. Next, the playgrounds, though much appreciated along with the Windmill in the previous set of answers, are now found wanting: greatly inferior to play areas in nearby villages, in particular Steeple Aston apparently. Plenty want to see more football pitches. Some would like to see more going on at the Castle Grounds.

So, when it came to the question asking whether we should use the parish's near half million pound capital reserve for capital projects or continue subsidizing our council taxes with the interest from it, you might have expected the answer to be, "Spend, spend, spend". In fact, the majority - 479 responders out of 723 – wanted to hang on to the capital. All the same, there were hundreds of suggestions how the money might be spent. Predictably refurbishment, or even rebuilding, at the Windmill Centre headed the list. Close behind came improvements to sports facilities (fencing or archery anyone?) and playgrounds (including providing one in Hempton). The nursery and pre-school, and a car park near Deddington village centre were other contenders.

Plenty of people complained about the lack of parking in Deddington – Market Place, Earls Lane and New Street being the blackspots – and some offered pretty radical solutions: do away with the grass verges, introduce residents' permits or time limits, or both, build a car park in Earls Lane or by the fire station, build an *underground* car park, move the Co-op. Help.

But, when it came down to it, more people were satisfied with parking arrangements in the parish than dissatisfied, and a handsome majority thought it would cause more harm than good to introduce parking controls in Market Place.

Maybe there are solutions to Deddington's shortcomings, maybe not. There was certainly one complaint the steering group will have a hard job solving: "It's too far from the sea."

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The Neighbourhood Plan website, where the responses to the questionnaires can be found in full, is at [www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

## Item for March Deddington News

### A walk on the wild side

Who do you think would be most concerned about whether there's enough for teenagers to do in Deddington? Teenagers themselves? Wrong. It's the adults who worry. Or at least that's the impression you get from the results of our Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire.

Just over half the age group responded to the youth questionnaire for 11 to 17 year olds, and there's a lot of interesting stuff - which schools they go to, their likes and dislikes in the parish. But it's striking that 62% seem to be satisfied that there's enough to keep them occupied here. By contrast, in the adult questionnaire, only 52% thought all ages were catered for, and no less than 70 wrote comments expressing a shared anxiety: "Unless you are into sport or drinking, there's not much for teens or young adults." Another respondent doubted whether any village could do any better - "as being a teenager is all about rebellion and boundary testing".

So what do this daredevil age group value most about Deddington? Among "youth activities and facilities in the parish", the most highly rated is the Castle Grounds, perhaps the nearest we have to a wilderness. Next came the senior playground at the Windmill and the tennis courts.

The list of improvements teenagers suggest has a familiar ring. They'd like an upgrade at the Windmill Centre, better play areas - "more fun stuff in the playground" - and a bigger astroturf football pitch. A respondent suggests "a good play area in Castle [grounds] with zip wire and bike track", which chimes with at least one respondent in the adult survey: "Any children's play area [at the Castle Grounds] needs to be basic and wild, in keeping with the surroundings."

Zip wires, whether at the Castle Grounds or the Windmill Centre, crop up quite often in both questionnaires - which conjures an image of parish council chair Alan Collins, on an inaugural ride, stuck in the middle, hanging there, like Boris Johnson before the Olympics (but way more elegant, obviously).

The teenagers' wish list also includes a roller disco, and an arcade and video games shop. More predictably there's a demand for a swimming pool, whether indoors or out - I lost count of how many people across both questionnaires thought this was a goer, but more than 20. All of these ideas might belong in the dream-on department, but they're worth considering. For instance, one teenager suggests a wider choice of DVDs (and video games?) at the library. Not an arcade for sure, but more realistic?

There's a poignant request for a "hangy outy place" for teenagers. Which mirrors exactly the adult observation, "There is nowhere for elderly people to meet for a chat". Likewise there are matching pleas for film shows at the Windmill - a kids club for Saturday morning movies, and a mid-week screening for oldies. Actually, I think a film club already exists at the Holly Tree.

Do the gilded youth of Deddington have their own transport – or exceptionally obliging parents? How else to explain the youth answers to the transport questions. Only 50% had used a bus in the last month, yet nearly 80% say they have no trouble getting lifts or transport.

That's apparently true in the evenings, too. A surprisingly low number, 25%, said they'd use a late bus home from either Banbury or Oxford - disappointingly low for those who want to see the bus service improve.

Returning to the adult questionnaire: there was note of foreboding in some of the responses which has proved to be all too well-founded with the news that the Duke of Cumberland's Head has now closed its doors – perhaps for good. “I worry for the pub in Clifton – if we lose that we will lose the heart of Clifton,” made a sad epitaph.

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The responses in full to the youth and adult questionnaires can be reached via our website, [www.deingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

Item for April issue of Deddington News

Second drop-in, second thoughts

The next big event in the Neighbourhood Plan's calendar is the second round of drop-in sessions. These are to be held in the Living Room in the church at the weekend coinciding with the April farmers' market: on Friday afternoon, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 2pm until late, Saturday morning and possibly after morning service on Sunday if this can be arranged.

The steering group have by now more or less got to grips with the responses to the parish questionnaire and are drawing up their goals and objectives which will form the basis of the final neighbourhood plan. These will be displayed on boards at the drop-ins and will be the first opportunity for those who completed the questionnaire – and those who didn't – to assess our interpretation of the dozens of tick-box answers and the thousands of additional comments.

We'll be looking to the drop-in sessions for guidance on the more contentious issues, such as parking and the criteria for where new development should be located in the parish – and to iron out conclusions where the results are a little fuzzy, or contradictory, for instance concerning the Castle Grounds.

Then, if we're hoping for improvements in the parish, we'd like to know which are the residents' priorities. The shopping list thrown up by the questionnaire is enormous – and the potential cost pretty high.

Nowhere is this clearer than in proposals for better sports facilities. A fair level of satisfaction with the existing facilities was expressed in the tick-box questions: tennis comes top with a 61% rating of "good" or "reasonable"; football and cricket comes next, in the mid fifties, followed by bowls with 41% satisfaction. Badminton has the lowest score, with only a 35% satisfaction rating.

Badminton crops up quite a lot across the questionnaire. On the one hand, here's a smattering of non-players who reckon badminton occupies too much time and space at the Windmill, on the other a strong contingent of players pitch in with a plea for a second court or a bigger hall.

Tennis provoked plenty of comment, too – some people wanting more courts, and floodlights, others bidding for more public access to the courts, preferably without charge.

Unsurprisingly since there are 12 Deddington football teams across the age groups, the biggest response concerns football, and virtually unanimously the cry is for more pitches - several of the respondents pointing out that some of the junior teams have to play outside the village because there's no room for them at the Windmill. And not just more pitches, a full-size 3G all-weather court is a popular demand. Where could these extra grass pitches be located – on additionally purchased land at the Windmill, at the Castle Grounds, at Welfords Piece in Clifton?

And the wish list goes on: a gym, a cycling track, a fitness trail, netball and squash courts, that old perennial, a swimming pool and - would you believe? - a croquet lawn.

What is less clear is how these improvements would be paid for – especially since a majority “voted” that the parish council should hang on to its near half million pound reserve fund and continue using the interest to reduce the council tax demand.

One place to look for funds is contributions from developers, but these may be quite small if the parish has its way, expressed in the questionnaire, and no more than 50 new homes are built between now and 2031. Another source of grants is the various funding bodies such as Sport England and the lottery. Of course there are various other non-sports contenders for that as well, including for instance the nursery and the pre-school, the Windmill Centre, the playgrounds.

So that is one of the things we’d like to hear from you at the drop-in sessions: which are dreams and which are serious requirements? We’re hoping even more will attend, Post-its at the ready, than came to the previous drop-ins last November. See you there?

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## **Item for May 2015 issue of Deddington News**

### **A double dose of democracy**

By the time you see this, the second drop-in sessions will already have taken place and the Neighbourhood Plan steering group will, with luck, have a lot more feedback on what you think of our progress so far. In the coming month we'll be analysing the results, and if necessary the topic groups will be rethinking their goals and objectives.

After that, we begin forming policies and the real work of composing a neighbourhood plan gets under way.

As it happens, there'll be another chance to air your views soon after the drop-ins – at the annual parish meeting which this year falls on Wednesday May 6 (Windmill Centre, 7.30pm), the day before the General Election. How much democracy can you take? Lots, we hope.

The parish meeting will, of course, focus on local issues. Alan Collins, chair of Deddington Parish Council, will give his report on the council's activities over the past year, and then the meeting will be turned over to the public for comments and suggestions. If you'd like to make a more lengthy contribution, let Lorraine Watling, the parish clerk, know as soon as possible and she will include it on the agenda ([deddingtonparishcouncil@googlemail.com](mailto:deddingtonparishcouncil@googlemail.com) or drop her a line at the Windmill Centre office).

One of the strong messages to emerge from the recent Neighbourhood Plan survey was that - although Deddington parishioners place a high value on the parish's play areas, the sports fields and the Windmill Centre - there is also a high level of criticism of them, which took some by surprise.

We now know that a fair number of residents would like better playground equipment and more space – more pitches and more courts - for sport. So the parish council and the neighbourhood planners would be pleased to hear what are your priorities. (Or, indeed, if you think there's too much emphasis on sport and play.)

Nobody wants to raise false expectations. Croquet lawns and swimming pools might be some parishioners' heart's desire, but new loos at the Windmill may be more doable. Realistic or not, let's hear it.

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## The message of the drop-ins

Around 150 people turned out for the second round of the Neighbourhood Plan drop-in sessions at the end of April. We'd have preferred more – especially from the western end of the village. But the comments posted by the parishioners who did attend suggest the steering group is on the right track, and only a few tweaks will be needed to the proposed goals and objectives.

After two drop-in sessions and the questionnaire, the same broad themes have emerged. If there is to be new housing, the preference is for small developments, in traditional ironstone style – and above all, mainly comprising two- or three-bedroom homes to accommodate older downsizers and young couples starting out. Energy efficiency is also a top priority,

The Conservation Area, the historic features, green spaces and rural ambience of the villages are all valued highly – and the Neighbourhood Plan should aim to preserve them.

If there is any money to be spent to the benefit of the community, once again the message was loud and clear – improve the Windmill Centre and sports facilities, expand the sports fields and update the playgrounds.

The post-its reveal division as well as agreement: for instance, concerning the Castle Grounds, between those – aided and abetted by English Heritage – who want the Castle Grounds left exactly as they are, and those who would like wider use made of them.

Familiar themes cropped up in the Movement and Transport section, too – the wish for a car park close to the village centre, 20mph speed limits and cycle tracks. However one wish – for more frequent bus services – has, astonishingly, already been granted, at least partially. From May 31, the S4 bus between Deddington and Banbury will be half-hourly, which means about a dozen more buses each way per day – and the last bus from Banbury will leave at 7.20pm (rather than 6.45pm as hitherto). These extra journeys will not be subsidised by Oxfordshire County Council, so to make sure we retain them, we'll have to use them - regularly.

In the Business and Employment section there was the usual demand for: better mobile phone reception – maybe someone will take note, this time; more food shopping opportunities either at an expanded Co-op or another shop elsewhere; and better broadband. This last is a puzzler. Some parishioners are evidently not aware that since BT Openreach installed fibre optic cable in Deddington a couple of years ago, the whole parish has access to Superfast broadband (at speeds up to 330mbp, whatever that means). If you weren't connected then, Zen, Plusnet, Sky and BT all provide services (see [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)). If you encounter any problems you can get in touch with David Rogers on 01869 337065 who may be able to help.



For those who like the detail, you can see all the post-it comments transcribed on our website (see address below).

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## Item for July issue of Deddington News

Issues have recently arisen surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan that need to be resolved before we can proceed as planned. This may or may not affect the third round of drop-in sessions scheduled for the end of July. Expect more information about the drop-ins from leaflets and posters – or the next Deddington News.

One of the least contentious areas of the Neighbourhood Plan is the need to promote public transport. Which becomes more feasible since, as reported last month, the S4 bus service between Deddington and Banbury has doubled (with no subsidy from the county council).

We are the lucky ones. Less than three weeks after our new improved service began an Oxfordshire County Council officer was breaking bleak news to a meeting of Parish Transport Representatives. OCC was in “a really, really difficult financial situation”, she said, and £6.25million is to be cut from the supported transport budget by April next year.

A public consultation into how best the savings can be made began on June 20 and will continue for 12 weeks. These are OCC’s proposals:

- a) Reduce the cost of the Home-School service by £3.6million through efficiency measures. Currently OCC spends £9m on taxis ferrying children to school individually – in future OCC fleet vehicles will pick up more than one, or several children who live close to each other and deliver them to their various schools. It is recognized this will mean longer journey times for some children.

Another wheeze is to serve several needs with the same transport – so the same bus might take children to school and the elderly and infirm to day centres. Good fun for all or a recipe for mayhem?

- b) Next, the council will either cut subsidies to bus services completely or reduce the subsidy by £2.6million. At present 9% of the county’s bus services are subsidised – most of them to the villages. If there is still money to spend, OCC want to prioritise services for the elderly and vulnerable who most commonly use off-peak buses – and the off-peak buses are cheaper to subsidise because the bus companies have more vehicles at their disposal. However OCC are expecting the chancellor to announce new cuts to local government in his July statement – which could mean a further £60m cutbacks for OCC and most likely end all subsidies to bus services.
- c) Dial-a-ride is to be cut completely, to be replaced where possible by voluntary services, and “community transport”. One-off pump-priming grants will be available to parish council, for instance, to start up their own community service, probably with mini-buses.

OCC is very anxious that as many people as possible participate in the consultation. It is available on line now – at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stconsultation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stconsultation). Hard copies should be available at libraries, but if you have a problem getting hold of one, get in touch with me.

The most immediate effect of this for Deddington is that the present shuttle service from Deddington to Duns Tew and Middle Barton and back – entirely supported by OCC - may be discontinued from December 5, the end of the contract period which started in June.

Concessionary bus passes cost OCC £8million and will continue – they are ringfenced because they are a statutory service. As one of the parish transport representatives commented – some of us will have free bus passes but no buses to use them on. The transport representatives are admirably articulate and a doughty bunch of campaigners and hearty walkers – our meetings, I should say, are one of the few occasions these days where I feel among the youngest in the room.

There is railway news too. Chiltern Railways have published their timetable for their new service from Oxford Parkway (on the far side of Kidlington from us and on the S4 bus route) to Marylebone. It'll run every half hour during the day, with extra trains during the morning rush hour, and will take a little under or over an hour. It will call in at the old Bicester Town station, now upgraded and renamed Bicester Village. The service will be launched on October 26.

Bon voyage.

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Item for September issue of Deddington News

## **The numbers game**

The Deddington Neighbourhood Plan is back on the road after a lull over summer and a bit of heart-searching about how best to proceed. The steering group is agreed that we need to move fast and produce a preliminary document setting out our key findings to ensure we exert maximum influence on Cherwell District Council before they formulate the second part of their Local Plan.

The first part of CDC's Local Plan was approved by an independent examiner in June and then formally adopted by the council in July. A striking new element of the plan is to bump up from 670 to 1,140 the scheduled number of homes to be built in Cherwell district every year until 2031.

Most of these homes are to be built in Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and Upper Heyford. But 750 new homes are to be built in 23 of the largest villages that have the best facilities – or are more “sustainable”, in the jargon. Deddington is one of these.

In the second part of its Local Plan, Cherwell District Council is now deciding how those 750 homes should be distributed between the villages – and what Deddington's share should be.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire carried out throughout the parish last year are clear. A large majority of those parishioners who responded thought that growth in housing in Deddington between now and 2031 should be no more than 50 houses, and the maximum number of dwellings on any one site should be 20. (See the results of the survey at the website below.)

A document summarising the main points from the questionnaire is being drawn now and will be forwarded first to the parish council for approval and then to CDC lickety-split.

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## Item for October 2015 issue of Deddington News

### Deddington Neighbourhood Plan

Something concrete at last. The Deddington Neighbourhood Plan steering group has drawn up a “draft strategic guidance” document – which was unanimously endorsed by the parish council at its September meeting and is now being sent on to Cherwell District Council.

The document focuses on housing, and the emerging policies it contains are based on the key findings of our consultations in the community and on established planning principles. The aim is to exert maximum influence on the district council as it decides how many of the 750 new homes that are earmarked for villages in Cherwell should be allotted to Deddington.

The strategic guidance kicks off with a bullet-point summary as follows:

- \* **Housing growth:** The maximum number of new homes to be permitted [in the parish of Deddington] in the period 2015-2031 should be 50. The maximum number of houses on any one site should be no more than 20.
- \* **Location:** Building should largely be outside the Conservation Area but within the village boundaries. There is a strong preference to preserve the Conservation Area and the green spaces within and around it.
- \* **Brownfield:** Development which makes use of previously developed land and buildings will generally be preferred to greenfield locations.
- \* **Distance:** Distance from the centre of the village and the health centre should be taken into account in providing suitable homes for older residents to downsize.
- \* **Housing need:** Priority should be given to 2 and 3 bedroom houses, affordable homes and provision for older residents wishing to downsize. The Neighbourhood Plan survey indicated 55 people wish to downsize now, and 183 think they may do in future. 53 would like a starter home.
- \* **Affordable housing:** Any new development of 10 homes or more will include 35% affordable homes. Of these affordable homes, the maximum number permitted by Cherwell District Council will be available for shared ownership. People with strong Deddington connections should be given priority.
- \* **Infrastructure:** Given the known problems within the parish, no development should go ahead without adequate infrastructure providing water and, in particular, sewerage.

The rest of the strategic guidance includes more detail of the policies and the figures from the neighbourhood plan questionnaire carried out last year that back them up. You can find the complete document on our website (see below) or there will be copies in the library.

The intention now is to hold a third set of drop-in sessions, this time at the Windmill centre towards the end of November, when parishioners will be able to respond to these policies and all the other emerging policies across the whole gamut that will make up the final neighbourhood plan – community,

sport, the environment, transport, traffic, cycleways and footpaths,  
businesses.

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## **Item for Deddington News December issue 2015**

### **Fall out from the drop-ins**

By the time you read this the Neighbourhood Plan's third round of drop-in sessions will have taken place - hopefully with a big turn-out. In our previous consultations with parishioners, proportionately more people living in Deddington's Conservation Area have taken part than people from the west end of the village. We're hoping that the change of venue for the drop-ins - at the Windmill Centre rather than the church - will have changed this.

As you will see from the updated policies (which will be posted on the Neighbourhood Plan website shortly) we have been very much influenced by the key findings revealed by the parish questionnaire last year. For instance, the widespread dissatisfaction at the state of the Windmill Centre and the quality and quantity of sports and play facilities has been taken to heart by the Neighbourhood Plan's Community group - and the parish council. Parish funds have been set aside and some refurbishing is already under way at the Windmill Centre.

In other areas it is more difficult to balance competing interests. On the one hand there is wide concern that the historic beauty of Deddington village - and Clifton and Hempton - be preserved. On the other hand, the questionnaire demonstrated, alongside the need for starter homes, a sizeable demand for homes suitable for downsizers - more than 200 expressing the wish to move to elderly-friendly accommodation now or in the future.

There has been some discussion in the steering group as to how many of these 238 would actually choose to move house when it came to the point, even if suitable homes were available - partly because of the traumatic upheaval of leaving a loved family home, and partly because, given the present astonishing upward spiral of house prices, the best way to invest your assets might be to stay put.

Even so, we have to assume that since the population of Deddington parish, like that of the county as a whole, is ageing, there will be a need for such housing. And the likelihood is that the elderly will wish to live close to the health centre, the shops and bus stops - perhaps in the areas that are so highly prized for their landscape value. How to square the circle?

Another time bomb awaits. The Neighbourhood Plan group's present policies for affordable housing may have to be rethought in light of the government's Housing Bill now going through Parliament. At present our housing policy HOU6 proposes that any new development of 11 homes or more should include 35% affordable homes ie, homes for rent for people on the Cherwell District Council housing register or shared ownership homes. This conflicts with a clause in the Housing Bill that requires developers to provide a percentage of starter homes - at a 20% discount of market prices - instead of affordable homes in the

traditional sense. Depending on timing, this could even affect the proposed share of affordable housing on the School Ground site in Deddington.

A second clause in the Housing Bill proposes that housing association tenants should have the Right to Buy the homes they occupy, which could potentially cut the number of affordable dwellings available in Deddington. An exemption has been agreed for rural areas – as confirmed in a letter from the Housing Minister Brandon Lewis forwarded to Deddington Parish Council, which raised the matter with our MP Victoria Prentis – but it is not clear whether such an exemption will apply to Deddington since it is not, for example, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (officially at least - we might think otherwise).

If you have views on any of these issues, especially if you were unable to attend the drop-in sessions, please write to our website ([www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan)), and/or to me – or, if you don't have online access, in a letter to the parish council office at the Windmill Centre in an envelope marked "Neighbourhood Plan".

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*This is the viewpoint of the author, not necessarily that of the NP steering group as a whole.*